TO CAUBUL

WITH THE

CAVALRY BRIGADE,

A NARRATIVE OF
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE FORCE
UNDER GENERAL SIR F. S. ROBERTS, G.C.B.

WITH

MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR.

BY

MAJOR R. C. W. MITFORD,
XIVTH BENGAL LANCERS

"Rude am I in my speech,
And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace—
Yet, by your gracious patience
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver."

Othello, Act 1, Sc. 3.

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INTRODUCTION.

KNOWING that readers generally eschew an introduction, the question arises, "*Cui bono?*"

I feel, however, that a few preparatory words may not be out of place to put the exceptional people who do not avoid prologues *au courant* of what follows, and to bespeak their kind indulgence to my work.

This little book does not pretend to be anything beyond a sketch of personal experiences during the late Caubul Campaign, and thus its purely egotistical tenor will I trust be apologised for.

Leaving to other and more accustomed pens the task of writing a history of the Campaign, I have merely attempted to throw together in consecutive form, from notes taken at the time, the facts which occurred under my own observation,

and to describe scenes, people, and incidents as they appeared at the moment. In the little sketches I attach, I have also endeavoured to delineate faithfully the points of interest as we saw them.

I have not ventured in any way to criticise any occurrence in the war, nor to give any opinion on circumstances which have been brought prominently before the public, in military despatches or by newspaper correspondents.

For two years before we started at a day's notice to join the Koorum Column, my regiment had been stationed at Peshawur, a cantonment sadly notorious for its bad climate. During eight months we were under canvas in the Koorum Valley exposed at first to intense cold and frost, and then to pestilential malaria and most enervating heat, which told equally on officers and men. A gallant young officer, Lieutenant Whittall, lies buried at the little Fort of Bulesh Kheyl. In the ranks also many had succumbed, while all showed the effects of the exposure they had undergone, but when the order for the advance came,

all troubles were forgotten in the eager wish for active service. The manner in which this service was performed our General has already done us the honour to record, and our Sovereign to graciously acknowledge.

In launching this little record into print, I diffidently hope it may not be uninteresting to the public, and that it may prove an acceptable souvenir especially to our gallant General, Sir F. S. Roberts, to my brother officers, and to all my comrades in the field.

REGINALD C. W. MITFORD.

Hampton Court Palace,
October 23, 1880.

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TO CAUBUL

WITH

THE CAVALRY BRIGADE.

CHAPTER I.

BAD NEWS FROM CAUBUL.—PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE.—MARCH TO PEIWAR KOTUL, SHOOTUR GURDUN, AND KOOSHI.

We had been encamped at Koorum for some three months during the summer of 1879, and all, Europeans and Natives alike, were suffering more or less from the intense heat and malaria, sufferings made much more unendurable in the case of the former by the intense dullness and ennui which prevailed, and which were but little ameliorated by an occasional languid game of lawn tennis or polo. Men were talking of furlough, and looking

eagerly for the time when leave to England would again be granted, when the news of the attack on the Residency at Caubul, and of the massacre of poor Cavagnari and almost all his followers, burst upon us like a thunder-clap. All were in the wildest state of excitement, not diminished when, two days later, came the order for our regiment to advance and join the leading column at Kooshi, the first halting place in the Logur Valley. A very short time sufficed for the officers' preparations, few of us having more than the authorised weight of "kit," consisting of a tiny double-roofed tent, seven feet square, weighing eighty pounds; personal baggage restricted to the same weight (this required much consideration, even to the possibility of taking an extra toothbrush!); twenty-five pounds of baggage for each camp-follower, and a like amount for each charger. Little enough when it is considered that we were starting on a campaign of indefinite duration in an almost unknown country, but we were not long in finding out that our General had been quite right in thus restricting the amount of baggage. The arrangements

for the men took more consideration and a longer time. They all marched out of Koorum *on foot*, carrying five days' provisions for man and horse on the latter, packed in two canvas bags and slung across the saddle. This measure was necessitated by the scarcity of supplies between Koorum and the valley of the Logur River. The men were crowded four in a tent, instead of two, as usual, and all spare tents, baggage, &c., were stored in one of the Koorum forts, and left in charge of the sick and weakly men, all of whom were ordered to be left behind, to their intense disappointment. Almost every patient in the hospital implored the Doctor to discharge him, so that he might accompany the regiment to Caubul; but our Esculapius was inflexible, and most rightly so, as the sequel proved, for any man not in robust health must undoubtedly have succumbed to the cold and exposure of the campaign, which claimed many a victim even amongst those who started strong and in perfect health.

All our preparations having been thoroughly and rapidly completed, at 7 A.M. on the 23rd of

September we marched from Koorum, the men shouting and in the highest spirits at the prospect of active service, and the regiment presenting a very unwonted appearance. Blue, scarlet, and gold had all been discarded, and all were dressed from top to toe in *Khâkee*, or mud colour; the lances stripped of their gay scarlet and white pennons (we afterwards resumed these as a distinguishing mark), and the long jackboots replaced by ammunition "high-lows" and *putties*, or bandages of woollen stuff rolled round the leg from knee to ankle after the fashion of Cashmere sportsmen and Italian organ-grinders. This is a much better dress for walking in than long boots, and as we rightly expected a good deal of dismounted work in rocky ground, we adopted it with—need I say?—a total disregard to appearances.

Fifteen miles up the stony track brought us to our first encamping ground, Hubeeb Killa, the hills which lie north and south of the valley gradually closing in as we advanced westwards towards the Peiwar Kotul. Next morning we marched to Zuburdust Killa, our road at first

leading over rocky ground, and through the now dry beds of torrents, alternating with tracts of thorny scrub-jungle, from the depths of which we were occasionally saluted by the cries of a grey or black partridge. After six miles of this we reached the foot of the ascent to the Peiwar Kotul, a very steep, rocky, narrow gorge, the sides (where not perpendicular bare rock), sparsely clad with bushes and stunted pines, and the path only just broad enough for a gun-carriage.

On the right (north) of the pass rises the snow-clad peak of Seeta Râm, towering to a height of sixteen thousand feet, nearly four times the altitude of the highest mountain in Great Britain. Several officers had accomplished the ascent of Seeta Râm, amongst others the indefatigable Parson Adams, and Captain Woodthorpe of the Engineers. Near the summit they found a lake of considerable dimensions, locally known by the name of Abdoolkhâs. It is said that Jellalabad can be seen from the summit of the mountain on a clear day, the distance in a straight line being about forty miles.

Between the Peiwar and Seeta Râm lies another ascent from the Koorum Valley, the Speengawâi Kotul, still steeper and more difficult than the Peiwar route, landing the traveller on a level grass-grown plateau called by us "The Murg," from its likeness to the elevated pasture-lands so named in Cashmere, and which was used by the officers quartered in the neighbourhood as a polo-ground. The approach to the Murg from the huts at the Peiwar Kotul lies through a magnificent forest of pines, ilex, and holly, carpeted with wild flowers and ferns innumerable, interspersed with beds of wood strawberries and dewberries. Here and there the grey granite crops up in moss-grown rocks, making beautiful bits of foreground, and altogether the scenery is charming; and there is a splendid view of the Koorum Valley stretching away to the east, the river and its many little tributary streams glistening and flashing in the sun.

The utter stillness of all around is almost as impressive as the scenery; not even the twitter of a bird is to be heard, and the absence of animal

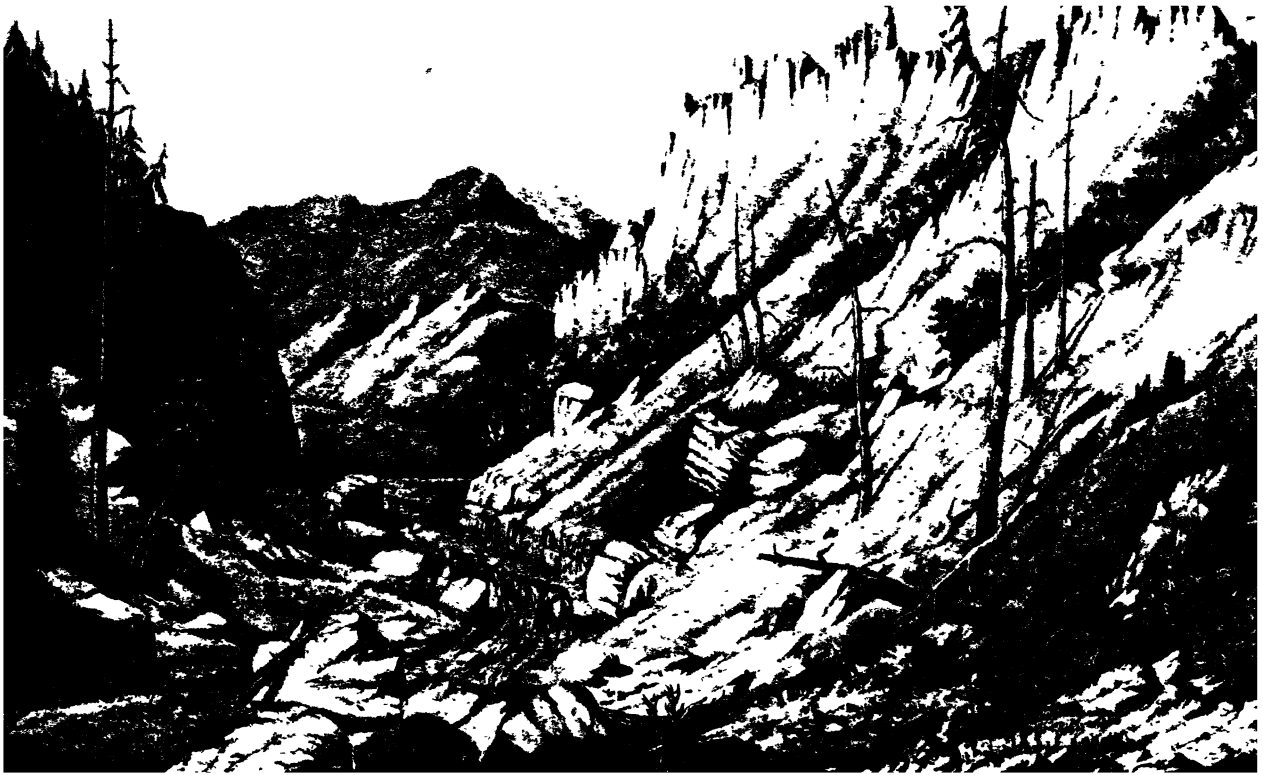
life is most remarkable. Insects, however, abound, and there is a wide field for the labours of either entomologist or botanist.

It was a long and wearisome climb for our men and horses, accustomed only to the level plains of India, and as I had no particular duty that day I rode on ahead of the regiment to the crest of the Kotul, where a friend received me with a hearty welcome, and provided a breakfast, which I enjoyed as only a half-tired and wholly hungry man can. After breakfast I left the Kotul—which I may here explain means a "col" or neck connecting two hills or ranges of hills—and riding through the gorge flanked by pine-forests and carpeted with flower-sprinkled turf, a mile and a half brought me to the commencement of the Hurriâb plateau, an elevated table-land some seven thousand feet above the sea, very fertile, richly cultivated, and producing wheat, barley, melons and apricots in abundance. I was not sorry to bid farewell to the Peiwar Kotul, and its conglomeration of dirty little huts, where unbounded hospitality was only rivalled by

innumerable fleas, though I dare say no distant time may see it metamorphosed into a favourite summer resort for the beauty and fashion of the new cantonments in the Koorum Valley, and the ascent of Seeta Râm will become as commonplace an expedition as that of the Rigi!

On Thursday the 25th of September, we marched from Zuburdust Killa to Ali Kheyl, where we found an Infantry Brigade collected.

Several of the regiments had been here for some months, and had made their camps very neat, marking out the paths with pebbles, and laying down plots of turf in various patterns in front of the tents. Many of these canvas dwellings were covered with boughs of trees, and the mess tent of the 92nd Highlanders was made more spacious by the soil having been excavated to a depth of three feet, a plan which, I believe, was extensively adopted in the Crimea. The 72nd had built themselves a very comfortable hut, and their example was being followed by other regiments; but of course all these and many other plans were upset by the order to "move on" The hospitable 92nd



asked us to dinner in the evening, and a right merry party we were.

Next morning, our horses having now transferred to their insides a considerable portion of the weight hitherto carried on their backs, we commenced the long and most fatiguing march to Kâsim Kheyl. Shortly after leaving Ali Kheyl the road bends to the right, or north, and enters the defile of Hazâr Darakht (the "thousand trees"), where it becomes merged in the rocky bed of a stream running through a pine forest, of which quite half the trees are destroyed by the natives having lighted fires at their roots in order to fell them; so the gaunt giants of the forest now rise like skeletons of the departed glories of the pass. These pine woods are backed by high cliffs, those on the east being broken and jagged into the most fantastic shapes, some like ruined castles with arch and turret and tower clearly defined, others like gigantic unfinished statues, while others again might be easily mistaken for Titanic prototypes of Cleopatra's Needle.

After twelve miles of this very rough but

there, warning us of the probability of our being attacked during the night by the Ghilzâis, one of the most powerful tribes in Affghânistân, and adding that "if hard pressed, a messenger could be sent for two companies of Infantry!" This raised a hearty laugh, for in the dark, the Infantry, being nearly three miles off, could not possibly have got to us under an hour and a half, by which time we should have been either victorious or destroyed, so we drank to ——'s continued health and increased wisdom, doubled the guards, and turned in.

On Saturday morning, the 27th of September, we marched at seven o'clock, and soon commenced the ascent of the Shootur Gurdun. This we found both easy and ugly, a very fair road having been made, and the hill side being completely bare of everything but stones. Reaching the crest we passed through the 72nd Highlanders' camp, and commenced the descent on the western side. This was long, arduous, and (for horses and baggage animals) in many places dangerous; however, we got to the bottom without mishap,

and turning to the north followed the banks of a small stream (the head waters of the Logur River), till we reached the "Dur-i-Dozukh," or "Gate of Hell." This is a very narrow gorge, or rather fissure, in a mountain of red and yellow rock, so narrow, indeed, that we were compelled to thread it in single file, while many of the baggage ponies had to be unloaded, their burdens being too wide to pass intact. The rock rises perpendicularly some four hundred feet on each side. It is only about fifty yards through this fissure, but as a defensive position it is immensely strong, the flanks being protected naturally by the steep rocky hills, and artificially by the twin forts of Dobundi, which are built on each side of the western entrance. That on the northern side is in ruins, but the southern one is in good repair, and when we passed was occupied by a detachment of one of our Goorkha regiments. A few miles further brought us to a bare plateau, on the south side of which, and many feet below, lies the head of the Logur Valley, and after a rapid descent we reached the camp at Kooshi,

where we joined General Baker's force, the most advanced in Caubul. Here we halted for two days, pending further arrangements, and the arrival of Sir F. Roberts.

CHAPTER II.

KOOSHI. — ARRIVAL OF UNEXPECTED VISITORS. — "GUEST OR PRISONER?" — FORWARDS AGAIN. — FIRST BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY.

SUNDAY, the 28th of September, was marked by the arrival in our camp of most unexpected guests. A party of some twenty or twenty-five Affghân horsemen, including the leading men in Caubul, and headed by the Ameer Yâkoob Khân in person, rode into our camp and surrendered themselves, Yâkoob saying that he no longer had any power left, having been deposed by his own mutinous troops. What his true reasons for this step may have been we never knew—certainly not the one he gave, for no Affghân ever told the truth intentionally. Tents for himself and his suite were

at once pitched, and a guard of honour (?) of the 92nd Highlanders posted over them. He was accompanied by two old acquaintances of mine who had served in Hodson's Horse in the Mutiny, and who had come to throw in their lot with us.

Next day we again halted, and in the afternoon the bands played in the headquarters' camp, General Roberts having arrived. The Ameer did not leave his tent, but sat on a couch in the doorway with a pair of binoculars in his hand. He evinced some curiosity and excitement when the bagpipes began, but at all other times preserved an aspect of the most stolid apathy. He is a man of about six or seven and thirty, with a light almond complexion and a very long hooked nose, the lower part of the face hidden by a black moustache and beard, the eyes having a dazed expression like a freshly-caught owl. This is said to have been caused by the five years' confinement in a dark cell to which his father, Sher Ali, subjected him for conspiring against him.

The following day saw us again *en route*, and we marched through a fertile valley, keeping near

the banks of the Logur stream, to Zurgun Shahr. This Logur valley is one of the chief granaries of Northern Affghânistân, *i.e.* Caubul, and is thickly sprinkled with villages, all walled and gated as is the invariable custom in this country of treachery and rapine ; each village is a fort in itself, and of no mean strength, owing to the height of the walls and the tenacity of the clay composing them. From one of these our rear-guard, consisting of the 5th Punjab Infantry, was fired on whilst on its way to camp ; so next morning my regiment was sent off by moonlight with orders to surround the village before dawn, and allow no one to leave it. This we did, and as two parties attempted to force their way through at different points, firing on us when ordered back, the lance had to be used a little. At 7 A.M. an officer of the political department arrived, and we then entered the village unopposed, and seizing the Mâliks, or head men, took them back to camp.

In the afternoon we went to examine an aqueduct near camp. There are many of these throughout the plains and villages of Affghânistân,

and as they are very peculiar, a short description of one of these "Kuraiz," as they are locally called, may be interesting.

A spring is tapped at the foot of one of the lower ranges of hills, and from this point an underground channel is tunnelled, having a very slight gradient. Through this the water is led, sometimes for fifteen or even twenty miles. At every fifty or sixty yards a shaft is sunk, which gives light and air to the workmen, and afterwards serves as a well from which the clear cool water is drawn. The course of the "Kuraiz" is marked by the earth thrown up from these shafts, and they also serve to warn the horseman of the dangerous vicinity. To-day the Colonel's terrier made an involuntary underground journey, tumbling down one well and being pulled up out of the next, to which he had been swept by the force of the stream. Most of these watercourses are full of small fish, very light-coloured and all but blind from living so constantly in the dark.

Next day, Thursday, the 2nd of October, we again halted, and on the following morning

marched to Zâhidâbâd, where we made another day's halt. On the 5th we reached an encamping ground, with no particular name, in the district of Châr Asiâb (or the "Four Water-Mills"), and subsequently found that these mills, which are much valued by the Affghâns, frequently give the name to a village or district; *e.g.* "Huft Asiâb," the Seven Water-Mills.

After arriving in camp, which was only twelve miles from Caubul by the nearest road leading through the Sung-i-Navishta defile, we sent out Cavalry patrols, who reported all quiet in the neighbourhood; so we made ourselves comfortable and turned in early, little thinking that we were on the eve of a general action.

During the night rumours were circulated to the effect that the Affghâns really did intend to make a stand, and that Yâkoob Khân had only given himself up as a pretence, with the real object of spying out our weak points.

CHAPTER III.

ACTION OF CHÂR ÂSIÂB.—A LUCKY MISS.—AN UNLUCKY SPILL.—AN UNPLEASANT RIDE.—RETURN TO A CAMP WITHOUT TENTS.

CHÂR ASIÂB, Monday, the 6th of October 1879.—Early this morning two Cavalry patrols were sent along the two roads leading to Caubul. The path lying to the north, which after crossing the Chardêh Valley enters the south-western suburbs at Deh Muzung, was felt by a party of twenty of the 14th Bengal Lancers under Captain Neville, while the southern road, leading direct through the Sung-i-Navishta, was taken by Captain Apperley and twenty of the 9th Lancers.

At 9 A.M. the former officer reported having been fired on from a village, losing one horse



killed, and the latter that he had occupied a village and was hard pressed. I was at once sent with twenty lances to look after Apperley and report fully, while some Native Infantry were sent in Neville's direction. We outstripped our guide, and taking a wrong turning I came upon Neville, who showed me which way the 9th patrol had gone, and after a scramble across country I hit on the right path, which I found blocked by villagers carrying beds, clothes, cooking pots, and in short all their removeable household goods, in the direction of our camp. I soon heard firing ahead, and at five minutes past ten came up with Apperley's party. His men had dismounted, and he had placed them in a capital position, occupying a shallow ditch surrounding a small square mud fort, under cover of which he had placed his horses. A range of steep rocky hills rose in front, broken by the Sung-i-Navishta Pass, through which the road to Caubul ran side by side with the Logur stream. On our right of this pass three hills jutted out from the main range, commanding the mouth of the defile ; and

round our left swept more hills, less steep than the main range, but all alike stony and barren. On our left front, at the foot of the lower hills, lay several small walled gardens from which the enemy were firing, their bullets usually flying over our heads, but occasionally knocking up the dust about us, or plunging into the wall with a dull thud. The range showed that rifles were being used, but fortunately the system of musketry instruction pursued in the Caubul Army did not seem quite as good as our own. A small party of the 12th Bengal Cavalry were in a garden on the right, and all the dismounted men were busily returning the fire of parties of the enemy's infantry who occasionally showed themselves, but carefully kept in ground too broken and far too well protected by village walls and vineyards for cavalry to act mounted. I therefore contented myself with reinforcing Apperley's men with some of my own, and permitted the rest to dismount and water their horses at a stream close by. Being exceedingly thirsty myself, but having stupidly omitted to bring a cup, I told the 9th Lancer

trumpeter to fill his bugle at the stream. Just as he was handing it to me a bullet struck the ground between our feet, upon which the lad (he could not have been more than fifteen or sixteen) coolly remarked, "Lucky that chap didn't know which of us to aim at, sir!"

Finding that the enemy would not come to me, and that I could not get at them, I sent a note into camp to the Chief of the Staff, and received a reply telling me to hold on where I was, and adding that reinforcements were being sent. The long shooting went on for another hour, and then arrived three guns of G 3, Royal Artillery, under Major Parry, a wing of the 92nd Highlanders under Major White, who took command of the whole as senior officer, and the 5th Punjab Cavalry. We at once moved on towards the mouth of the pass of Sung-i-Navishta (the "Written Stone"), so named from an inscription in Persian on a mass of rock in the middle of the pass, stating that the road had been made in the reign of Shâh Jehân. This was afterwards removed to the front of Sir F. Roberts' quarters in Sherpore.

While waiting for our reinforcements we had heard heavy firing on our left (west), and bodies of our troops, which could through the glasses be easily recognised, were seen moving along the crests of the hills in a northerly direction, *i.e.* towards Caubul. We had no sooner moved from under cover than the hills on both sides of the pass were seen swarming with the enemy, particularly those on our left front, in the Caubul direction. They had innumerable standards — red, white, dark-blue, green, or yellow; these show the different tribes or villages from which the levies come. The Ghâzis, or religious fanatics, were all dressed in white, and the Ameer's regular troops in dark brown with red facings. The *tout ensemble* was most picturesque. Our three guns soon got into position, and at once opened fire on the nearest hill, and were answered by four mountain guns (rifled) in the mouth of the pass, to which Parry soon turned his attention. These guns made very fair practice indeed.

White now rode up and said that he was going to drive the enemy off the hills on our right with

his own men, and the guns were to advance and open fire on the crest of the nearest hill, where a number of men and standards were collected; we therefore advanced to within one thousand five hundred yards of the hill and guns, which were nearly in line, and Parry again opened fire. I had now been joined by Captain Neville with his patrol, so I took the gun-escort, leaving the 5th Punjab Cavalry free to act should an opportunity occur. Meanwhile we had leisure to watch the advance of the 92nd, which was a splendid sight. The dark-green kilts went up the steep, rocky hill-side at a fine rate, though one would occasionally drop and roll several feet down the slope, showing that the rattling fire kept up by the enemy was not all show. Both sides took advantage of every available atom of cover, but still the kilts pressed on and up, and it was altogether as pretty a piece of Light Infantry drill as could well be seen.

Parry's fire was capitally directed, and shell after shell burst on the crest of the hill, or wherever the enemy could be seen gathering for

a rush down, as they often did. Nor were they much behindhand with their fire, for in addition to a long rifle-shot which killed a Sikh Sowar of the 5th Punjab Cavalry after passing over our heads, their shells came very unpleasantly near us. Fortunately none of them burst; and as a conical does not ricochet like a round shot, they were harmless after once plunging into the soft ploughed field in which we were standing. One, however, very nearly made an end of two of us, striking the ground within a yard, and covering us with dust. On digging it up, we found it in all respects the same make as our own, except that the percussion fuse was sunk below the level of the shell-head, and to this little defect we probably owed our lives.

By 4 P.M. Parry had silenced the enemy's guns, and the 92nd took the hill with a cheer. We instantly sent out scouts to the front, who reported that the enemy were retiring, so we gallopped forward, and on reaching their guns found there were four of them, one having a wheel smashed by a shot, and the two horses (the guns

had been drawn, not packed on mules as usual with mountain artillery), two nice-looking greys, lying, one dead and the other terribly mauled by a shell; so the Veterinary Surgeon of Parry's Battery at once put the poor beast out of pain with a carbine bullet.

Meanwhile the Highlanders had driven the enemy off the next hill, and they were in full retreat on Caubul. The masses on the high hills on our left, who had been futilely firing at us all the time from a large old-fashioned smooth-bore gun which they had dragged up the rocks with immense labour, finding themselves out-flanked on both sides (General Baker's force having captured the heights on their right), thought they too had better be moving; so they cleared off the crest, and went down the further side of the hills in the direction of the Bâlâ Hissar.

The sun having by this time set, and neither horses nor men having had any food since starting in the morning, I decided on returning to camp; so we turned our horses' heads in that direction, thoroughly tired by the heat and excitement of the

day, but the latter was not quite over yet. We trotted as long as it was light enough to see, and just as I gave the order to walk in a sort of lane with a very narrow raised path, flanked by ditches some seven or eight feet deep and twelve or fourteen wide, we first came acròss all the commissariat and baggage animals returning from grazing, going *our* way, and then the 5th Punjab Infantry escorting a train of mules laden with intrenching tools going the *other* ! Of course the result was a complete jam. At length, by dint of pulling, pushing, and vituperation I worked my way through the mass of biting, kicking, butting brutes with my faithful orderly close behind me, and then waited for Neville and the men. Our only light now was that shed by the stars, and their reflections in the ditches alone enabled us to keep on the path.

I was presently joined by Neville, who had sprained his knee badly owing to his horse falling into one of these ditches, and one or two of the men then came up. We were talking over the events of the day, when suddenly five shots were fired

at us from the right-hand bank, so close that the burning wadding fell amongst our horses' feet. The men slipped quietly off their horses and replied with their carbines, and the rest now coming up a regular fusillade would have commenced had I not forbidden it, as of course firing in the dark was not only waste of ammunition, but would have clearly shown the enemy (who could move where they pleased in the open ground) where we were, penned up in single file in the lane.

I moved on as quietly as possible, and in another hour we welcomed the sight of our camp-fires, and shortly afterwards passed the picquets, filed into the lines, and dismounted, feeling by no means sorry that our day's work was over. We had an uncomfortable night, for we were to advance early the following morning, and another regiment having delayed the march on a previous occasion by not striking their tents in time, the General had ordered all tents to be packed overnight, so we indulged in the pleasures of a bivouac. Luckily for me I had been thoughtfully supplied

with a "Wolseley bed" made of waterproof sheeting lined with railway rugs, so I was thoroughly well protected from cold and damp.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUNG-I-NAVISHTA. — NO LOOTING! — FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE CITY.—CAVALRY PURSUIT.—SHERPORE.—A BIG BAG OF GREAT GUNS.—ROUGH AND READY JUSTICE.—BIVOUAC.

We paraded at 5 o'clock next morning, the 7th of October, and were kept waiting mounted in a bitterly cold wind for a considerable time.

At last we moved off, following the same route as we had taken the day before, and passing the scene of action, entered the narrow part of the pass, which consists of a winding stony road (in some places mere slabs of granite), with a steep rocky hill rising on the left, and the deep stream of the Logur on the right.

We passed several deserted Affghân guns *en route*, some having apparently been abandoned

because they had got into difficulties from which the teams could not extricate them, others with broken wheels or axle-trees. These were all afterwards brought into camp. Here I picked up a really well-made brass helmet with plated mounts and a red horsehair plume, the plate in front bearing three guns and a Persian inscription. Many of these helmets were afterwards found amongst the stores in the Bâlâ Hissar.

We continued our march till we came to a collection of villages called Bîn-i-Hissar, where we were ordered to bivouac in quarter-column. Seeing that other officers in the Brigade were pitching their tents, most of us followed suit, and made ourselves comfortable.

Shortly after our arrival there was a tremendous row in a neighbouring village, and some of the inhabitants came to complain that they were being plundered. As the most stringent orders had been issued by Sir F. Roberts, prohibiting anything of the sort, I was at once sent to stop it. It was easy enough to turn out the soldiers, but the camp-followers, as usual, gave a good deal of

trouble, and I had to fire a couple of shots over their heads before I could induce them to leave the village.

The next day was one of rest, as far as we were concerned, and the only event worth chronicling occurred in the evening while we were sitting at our *al fresco* dinner. All had been quite quiet until 6 o'clock, when a heavy explosion took place in the direction of Caubul ; this was caused, as we afterwards found, by the accidental ignition of a magazine in the Sherpore cantonment.

Early on the morning of the 8th I went out with a squadron to relieve Major Hammond and the 5th Punjab Cavalry on outpost duty. I had to protect the front and right of our camp, and to watch the Jellâlabâd road. There was a range of low hills between the camp and this road, and the intervening plain was either deep, impassable bog, or clay that had been cut up by cattle while soft, and was now baked as hard as stone.

At 11 A.M. I was recalled, and found that information had been received of the abandonment of the city by the enemy, and that the Cavalry

Brigade under General Massy was ordered in immediate pursuit, so I had my waterproof bed strapped under the cantle of the saddle, filled one holster with hard boiled eggs and cold chicken, and was ready for any emergency. Neville was left in camp, much to his disgust, but as he could neither put on a boot nor stand the fatigue on account of the sprain he got on the 6th, it was a case of "Hobson's choice."

The brigade fell in almost immediately on the road skirting the camp, and we moved off in a westerly direction towards the Sherpore cantonment. At first our pace was a walk, and we had time to buy and distribute a basket of particularly good apples which were offered for sale by a small boy sitting by the roadside. The path soon turned a little to the left, in the direction of the Bâlâ Hissar and city, passing through long lines of poplar-trees, and approaching the more thickly planted outskirts of the city. As our object was to keep away from cover as much as possible, not knowing what it might conceal, we crossed the watercourse to our right, which proved to be only

two feet deep, and kept out in the open plain towards the Siah Sung ("Black Rock") plateau, leaving the horse-lines of the Ameer's cavalry on our right. These lines were precisely on our own plan, but cut up in every direction with holes and trenches full of green, stagnant, fetid water. On our left rose the Bâlâ Hissar, its crenelated walls and crumbling towers glowing in the sun, while further on the smoke of the city hung above the trees, the whole crowned by the barren rocks cresting Tukht-i-Shâh and the great Asmâi ridge.

We now crossed a rocky gap in the Siah Sung plateau, and found ourselves close to the south-eastern angle of Sherpore, where we drew up for a few minutes to watch the enemy, who now occupied the Asmâi heights in large numbers. The Asmâi is an irregular rocky ridge rising about one thousand feet, very steep, and in many places inaccessible from the plain below; it divides the valley of Caubul from that of Chardêh, and its crest is six thousand seven hundred feet above the sea.

General Massy now attempted to open heliographic communication with General Sir F. Roberts, but Siah Sung intervening, this was found to be impossible. We presently made out a body of our infantry with some mountain guns creeping up the eastern point of the Asmâi range, just above the city, and General Massy, rightly divining that their object was to drive the enemy off the hills, instantly set off for a gap called "Owshâr Kotul," at the western extremity, passing as he went along the front of Sherpore. One of the gates standing most temptingly open, I rode in for a moment, followed by one or two others, and a most unexpected sight presented itself. We rubbed our eyes, pinched ourselves—no, we were *not* dreaming! The whole of the Affghân reserve artillery—guns of all sorts and sizes, mortars, tumbrils, spare carriages, &c. &c, was parked in the enclosure! It was a great catch, and we were highly delighted with our good fortune. There was no time to stop and count it then, but we afterwards found there were seventy-two guns and mortars, one of the

former being an old Dutch brass gun, bearing the date "1625." How it ever got to Caubul is a puzzle !

Leaving Sherpore behind us we gallopped on till we came to some fields, beyond which lay a stretch of nasty swampy ground; so, as the enemy showed no signs of really leaving their rocky fastness and descending into the plain, though small parties occasionally rushed out on the spurs and fired in our direction, we halted to breathe the horses and look about us.

We were now facing the Owshâr Kotul, a low neck connecting the Asmâi with the next ridge which runs round the head of the Caubul lake (now in our left rear, north). A path runs from the city along the foot of Asmâi over this Kotul into Chardêh, the crest of the pass being defended by a small "Sungah," or stone breastwork, now unoccupied.

Before we had had time to do more than glance round, one of our mountain guns on the heights "spoke," but the shell burst short, and the enemy replied with derisive cheers, waving their standards

and capering about like madmen. The next shot was better judged, and burst right among them, stopping their dancing and sending them to cover behind every available rock; and wonderfully good they are at taking cover too, as we had frequent opportunities of observing. We being in their rear could, of course, see all their movements, which were concealed from our force on the crest, and on the other side of them. Had we had the Horse-Artillery with us we might have made it very hot for them. Our guns continued to make very good shooting, but they had not much more than a moral effect, on account of the cover above mentioned. They could not be brought closer, as the ground was impracticable, even for mules.

After a short halt, seeing that the enemy had still no intention of venturing down, we pushed on towards the Owshâr Kotul, passing through some very swampy ground, and then clambering up a steep rocky bank on to the path which leads over the pass; this took us into the Chardêh plain, and eventually to the banks of a stream, clear and

bright as are all these mountain-born rivulets, where we watered our horses.

A squadron of the 12th Bengal Cavalry and another of my regiment had been left in the Caubul plain to watch the enemy on that side, and our remaining two squadrons now returned to the Kotul to cut off their retreat in that direction, the rest of the Brigade remaining in Chardêh, watching a camp which had been formed near the village of Dêh Muzung, at the entrance to the city. On our way we came across five men evidently attempting to join the enemy from a neighbouring village. They assured us that everything was quiet on that side, and some shots being fired just at that moment from the hills west of the Kotul, they averred that it was only some friends of theirs celebrating a marriage. It seemed a queer opportunity to select for a wedding, but then natives, of Caubul especially, are queer people, so the story was allowed to pass; but five minutes afterwards, just as we were in the worst and narrowest part of the little pass, these *soi-disant* "wedding-guests" favoured us with a volley,

which went over our heads, and our guides instantly bolted up the hill as fast as their legs could carry them! They were immediately caught and brought back to a sheltered nook behind the breastwork, the people on the hill taking care not to fire near them, but blazing away merrily at the rest of the regiment. Their aim luckily did not equal their zeal, and they hit no one. The traitor guides were at once shot; and after sending a small dismounted party to occupy the little breastwork, and thence keep down the fire of the enemy and prevent their descending the hill, we dismounted in the hollow and proceeded to discuss the contents of our holsters—an example speedily followed by the Native officers and men—while the horses had a feed of barley from the nose-bags which each officer and man carried slung to his saddle.

After exchanging a few shots with our men, the enemy on the opposite hill retired, taking care to keep well amongst the rocks; and about the same time the firing on the Asmâi heights also gradually died away.

At sunset we got orders to recall our squadron and that of the 12th Bengal Cavalry from the Sherpore direction, let them pass, and follow them to some villages and enclosures in the Chardêh plain, where we were to bivouac for the night. These two squadrons did not arrive till dark, and as the ground was unknown to us, and intersected in every direction with banks and water-courses, finding our way was a difficult operation.

However, after riding some three or four miles over ditches, round walls, &c., our trumpet was answered by our own regimental call, and we made for a high walled village with a garden attached. The approach was through a very narrow passage between walls reaching well above our heads, and just as the rear files of my squadron were entering it, a volley was fired into them from a patch of brushwood barely twenty yards off. The rear men instantly turned, and plunging through a watercourse, went through the copse in the dim twilight. They did not fire a shot, but next morning seven bodies showed that the lances had done their work—not a bad score for eight

men at night. We packed as best we could into the garden, already occupied by the 5th Punjab Cavalry, and drawing up in sections (*i. e.*, four abreast) in the broad dry water-channels, each man lay down as he dismounted alongside his horse, while the officers took possession of a small square platform in the centre.

As the Shootur-Sowar (camel-rider, one of whom is attached to each troop of a Bengal Cavalry Regiment) had arrived, bringing one of the mess servants, a well-stored picnic basket, and some blankets, we made some tea, had a good feed, and very soon consigning ourselves to the arms of Morpheus, slept soundly till awoke by the sentries firing at some real or imaginary enemy moving outside. The 9th Lancers, who were in the village just across the road, also fired during the night, but we were free from all real annoyance.

CHAPTER V.

CAVALRY PURSUIT CONTINUED.—A WEARY RIDE.—THE KOTUL-I-TUKHT. — WELCOME FRUIT. — RETURN THROUGH THE CITY.—HINDOO FRIENDS.—NEW ENCAMPING GROUND.

At daybreak next morning I was awoke by one of General Massy's staff to tell me that I had to take a squadron at once and reconnoitre for at least a mile all round the village; this meant a cross-country scurry of eight or nine miles. I saw no signs of the enemy except the bodies of those killed by our men on the previous evening, and some ponies wandering riderless about the field. These would have been annexed had not some countrypeople come forward and claimed them, when they were given up, although no one believed the story. So strict were the orders

against "looting," and so thoroughly were they carried out, that I feel sure many a rascally Affghân plundered *us*, instead of paying black mail himself!

On returning to the village (which was the afterwards notorious "Killa Kâzi") I found the rest of our little force drawn up and ready to move off as soon as I had reported all clear in the vicinity. We first went in single file along narrow foot-paths, and through or over water-courses for about four miles, when we struck the main road leading from Caubul to Ghuznee; this is on the whole a good, wide, mud road, though broken in some parts by wells, until it reaches the foot of the rocky hills to the west. Along this we gallopped, passing many evidences of the hasty flight of the enemy, who had taken advantage of the loophole opened by our withdrawal from the Owshâr Kotul on the previous evening to make their escape; on all sides were lying tents, heavy cooking vessels, and other *impedimenta*, with many a broken-down pony or mule. Passing a large village which appeared to be deserted, we came to

some water-mills on the bank of a small clear stream, but made no halt there, tempting as the cool shade and falling water seemed to us, parched with thirst and begrimed with dust as we were. Still spurring on—many a poor nag's laboured breath and heaving sides showing only too plainly how the combination of pace, distance, and hard, stony ground was telling on him, while some actually dropped under their riders, and were found dead and stiffening on our return in the evening —still spurring on, though many would fain have cried "Hold, enough!" we urged our wild career, till at length our leading files reached the head of the valley, and we drew up on a low *col* of easy ascent on both sides, crowned by a small watch-tower and called the "Kotul-i-Tukht." Here we halted and dismounted till a report came in from the scouts that the enemy was in sight on the hills to our right front; so we formed up in reserve, while the 9th Lancers and 5th Punjab Cavalry were sent down to the right, along the foot of the hills. At the same time the 12th Bengal Cavalry reconnoitred along the Ghuznee road, which here turns

to the left (south). We were now overlooking the Maidân Valley, which runs north and south, parallel with the Logur, from which it is divided by the range of rocky hills on a "col" of which we now stood. This Maidân Valley is very fertile, being watered by the Caubul River, thickly populated, and well cultivated.

Firing was soon heard from the hills on our right, and was replied to by the dismounted skirmishers. Finding we were not likely to be wanted immediately, we attacked the contents of our holsters, while the Doctor went to hunt for some water, which he found at a small spring close by. We waited on the Kotul for some two hours, when the 9th and 5th returned, the latter having accounted for about a dozen of the enemy and bringing with them a white standard bordered with blue fringe, and inscribed with warlike texts from the Korân.

After a further short halt to rest the party just returned, we turned our faces towards Caubul again without waiting for the 12th Bengal Cavalry, who did not return till some time afterwards, and

following the same road as we had come along in the morning, reached the large village which I mentioned as having then had a deserted appearance. It was now crowded with countrypeople, and all along the road through it were villagers proferring fruit for sale, melons, apples, pomegranates, and such grapes! The thirsty sowars bought extensively, and munched as they rode along. Shortly afterwards we reached an open space by the roadside, on to which we wheeled, formed up, and dismounted.

Here we were joined by the General and some of his Staff, the ubiquitous "Parson Adams" amongst them, of course. I hope he will excuse my taking the liberty of introducing our Protestant Chaplain to my readers, as he was quite a foreground figure in camp. A strongly-built, fresh-complexioned man, very keen about his own work and almost equally devoted to sport: I do not think he shoots, but he is certainly thoroughly at home in the saddle, and used, when Chaplain of Peshawur, to be a regular attendant at the meets of the "Peshawur Vale Hounds," when he fre-

quently showed the way to the best lay riders in the station. Cheery of voice, hardy of frame, and indefatigable at work or play, he was just "the right man in the right place," and was thoroughly liked and respected by all, from highest to lowest, especially those (and they were many) whom he cheered and comforted in sickness or sorrow.

Our poor tired horses had hardly had time to swallow their meagre allowance of millet-stalks, of which we had procured a small supply in the village at an exorbitant price, when we were ordered to fall in again and return to camp. Instead of continuing our route to Killa Kâzi, we turned off to our left (north), and followed the main road to Caubul. The distance proved greater than our leaders had expected, and we (14th) did not enter the suburbs till night had fairly fallen. We first passed through the straggling outlying village, or rather suburb, called Dêh Muzung; then, leaving some high half-ruined blank walls, looming threateningly through the starlit air, on our right, we rode along a narrow rocky path,

bandages, soldiers' woollen socks and ammunition boots, and a waterproof sheet. This sounds a good deal, but I argued that if I, a native of Northern Europe, to whom frost and snow "came natural," wanted a good deal of extra clothing, these poor servants must require still more; and the justice of my so reasoning was fully shown by the sequel, for I had hardly any illness amongst my followers (except occasionally when they overate themselves!).

We had been thus busying ourselves for some time when General Massy sent over to ask if I would like to go with him to the Bâlâ Hissar. On arriving there we found that an execution was just about to take place, one of the condemned being that arch-miscreant the Kotwâl, and the others four blood-stained ruffians who had aided and abetted him, so we took up a good position in front of the lofty gallows which had been erected for the principal culprit, who soon appeared escorted by a guard of the 92nd Highlanders, and followed by a procession which even at that moment provoked a perfectly irresistible roar of

laughter from the bystanders. Directly following the guard came about thirty of the camp sweepers, walking two and two, dressed in the jackets, kilts, and drawers (!) of the Ameer's Highlanders, and having black felt helmets stuck on over their turbans. They had previously dug a trench for the reception of the bodies of the condemned, and were now to act the part of sextons.

The Kotwâl was dressed in a velvet skull-cap, a vest of green silk (the Mahomedan colour), and loose white trousers. He walked firmly up the ladder, and tried if the drop were secure before stepping on it. He was then blindfolded and pinioned, which put a stop to the ceaseless telling of his beads which he had continued up to that time. The rope was then put round his neck, the provost-martial (an officer of the 92nd) dropped his handkerchief, and the wretch went to answer for his crimes before a higher tribunal. We then adjourned to a neighbouring courtyard, from the verandah of which the other four culprits were hung. I then wandered about the Bâlâ Hissar, and eventually came to the Ameer's

Palace, which occupies the north-western angle of the fortress. It is a rambling two-storied masonry building, consisting of two courtyards surrounded by rooms and passages. The first court contained the public rooms on the upper floor, the lower one being occupied by servants and store-rooms. Entering a dark archway, you dismount at the foot of a flight of stone steps leading into an unfurnished anteroom, from which a door glazed with many-coloured panes opens into the Hall of Audience, a fine room about forty feet long, twenty-five wide, and fifteen high; the walls are painted pale yellow, the ceiling white, and the floor is covered with two good Brussels carpets of rather gaudy patterns, one spreading from the door to the edge of a low daïs of one step, occupying the upper third of the hall, and the other covering the daïs itself. The furniture consisted of tables, chiffoniers, cabinets, and arm-chairs of elaborately carved Bombay black wood, a species of coarse ebony, the chair seats being covered with crimson velvet. On the walls were hung engravings and coloured lithographs repre-

senting the Emperors of Russia, Germany, Austria, France (Napoleon III.), and several coloured portraits of Yâkoob himself, which were not flattering except in the accessories of plumes and jewels. There was also a beautiful etching of Dost Mahomed, by a wandering Italian artist, and a "Firmân," or title-deed of honour from the Sultan of Turkey, the head of Islâm; this was in letters of gold on a blue ground.

There was a fireplace at each end of the room, and it would have looked rather well, but—from the ceiling depended an extraordinary collection of glass chandeliers, with shades and lustres of many coloured glass, interspersed with large glass balls, also coloured, and arranged with such marvellously successful incongruity that wherever there appeared the slightest chance of any two chandeliers matching, the interposing balls ruthlessly frustrated it. Altogether it had a most bewildering appearance, and gave one the idea of a Kaleidoscope gone mad.

I picked up a few useful "unconsidered trifles" for the benefit of the mess, and returned to camp.

Tuesday, the 21st of October.—We were just sitting down to luncheon when a note came from the Chief of the Staff telling me to take a party and visit certain indicated villages north of camp, to search for and bring in "General Saifoollah Deen," who had been one of the leaders against us at Châr Asiâb, and had been in hiding ever since. My guide was a Kizil Bâsh named Ibrahim Khân, who had brought in the information. He had been a Native officer in Hodson's Horse during the Mutiny, and had begged that his former Adjutant might be sent to seize the "General." I started at once with thirty of our men, and after a five mile canter we surrounded and searched a small village, but it was "drawn blank." We went on to the next, which was likewise surrounded; I went inside with Ibrahim Khân and half-a-dozen dismounted men, and searched the village thoroughly, as we supposed, but without effect. We were standing in the courtyard of the Mullick's (headman's) house, feeling considerably baffled, when the sound of women's voices inspired me with a "happy thought," and I called out to

Ibrahim Khân in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the place, "Where are the women's apartments? The General wants to see the *zenânah*." This produced the desired effect, for while Ibrahim Khân stood looking at me in open-mouthed astonishment, a chorus of indignant female voices came from a lattice hitherto unnoticed, and a revolver-muzzle delicately applied to the Mullick's head turned him into a tremblingly obedient, but most unwilling guide.

He took us up a narrow stair into an outer room from which I made Ibrahim Khân call on the now screaming women to veil themselves, and to be assured that they would not be molested. We then entered the *sanctum sanctorum* of a Musulman's house, and glanced round. In the farthest corner of the room was huddled a trembling mass of feminine garments, from which one or two feet only protruded (though I could swear I saw the flash of more than one pair of eyes before I left the room), while in front of a small door opposite sat one of the most hideous old women I ever had the misfortune to behold. I told her

to get out of the way, and Ibrahim Khân repeated the order in better Persian than I could muster, and then tried Pushtoo, but equally without effect —the creature only glared and gibbered at us with most awful grimaces, so I caught the old hag up in my arms, popped her down on the heap in the corner, and then, amidst a chorus of ear-piercing screams and guttural curses I kicked open the door in front of which she had been sitting, and discovered a small cell contrived in the thickness of the wall. As soon as my eyes got accustomed to the want of light, I discerned a white figure crouching in the farthest corner. I presented my revolver saying, "Come out, or I'll fire." A reply in a low voice was made in Persian. Not understanding it I called on Ibrahim Khân to interpret. It appeared that the man said he was lame and could not come, and he wanted us to go away and shut the door, as the light hurt his eyes. Part of this was very suspicious, as one of my principal *renseignements* of Saifoollah Deen was a bullet wound in the foot, received at Châr Asiâb.

We soon found arguments sufficiently powerful

to induce this "dweller in dark places" to come out into the light, and he had no sooner done so than Ibrahim Khân said to me in his broken English (which he always attempted when he did not wish to be understood by native bystanders, and in which he frequently made most ludicrous mistakes), "This your man, sir; this your damn rascal!" To make still more sure I insisted on the bandage being taken off his foot, and there, sure enough, was a half-healed bullet wound.

The prisoner was taken down to the gateway, placed on a pony found in the village (his own property, as it turned out), and we took him back to camp, pursued till out of earshot by the vituperations of the old hag and her lady friends, who had by this time unbundled themselves. I may as well finish "General" Saifoollah Deen's story at once. He was tried by the Military Commission, found guilty of participating in the attack on the Residency, and hung.

While talking with Ibrahim Khân on our way back to camp, he asked the question which was then and long afterwards uppermost in the

thoughts of all the inhabitants, whether Persian, Affghân, or Hindoo, "Who are the Sâhibs going to make ruler over Caubul?" I said I did not know, and he continued: "If you re-instate Yâkoob, it will drive us Kizil Bâshis into Hindustân; he will never forgive us for throwing in our lot with you. Do you think he is your friend? Listen to this. When the attack on the Residency was proving successful he had only to hold up his finger to stop it, yet what did he do? I and others went and begged him to interfere. His first answer was, 'What can I do? It is the will of God.' When Cavagnari Sâhib's letter was brought to him we again prayed him to interpose his authority. He replied, 'You too have eaten Kâfir (infidel) bread; you have become Kâfirs yourselves.' Being thus insulted we returned to our homes. The following day our regiments were disarmed and disbanded, and our pay discontinued; we were further mulcted of nine months' arrears of pay then due to us. Ameer! He is no Ameer—he is a *soor*! (pig)." I took this down on my return to camp, and I have also heard the same from others.

Whether *all* the accusations brought against Yâkoob Khân are true none can say, but quite enough has been proved to show that he is utterly false and treacherous, and that he should never be allowed to return to Caubul. Better far let the Russians occupy Affghânistân. The extra energy of the Nihilists would find a wide field for its diffusion, and a safer one for the civilised world in general, and the Czar in particular, than the secret societies of St. Petersburg and the cellars of the Winter Palace.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SHÔR BAZAAR.—RUSSIAN IMPORTS.—NATIVE LIQUOR AND BRITISH MEDICINE. — KIZIL BÂSH QUARTER. — NATIVE HORSE-DEALERS. — SHERPORE. —"LOODIÂNAH." — FIRST SNOW-STORM.

On the 22nd of October I paid another visit to the city, and this time devoted my leisure to the exploration of the "Shôr Bazaar."

This runs parallel to the Great Bazaar, than which it is much narrower and lower, the shops smaller and with no rooms above them, but covered over and protected from sun and snow in the same way. Here the principal commodities are Russian and Bokhâra china, silks, cotton-prints, and the universal cookshops and fruit-stalls.

There are many more Hindoo tradesmen in this

bazaar, easily recognised by the difference of their features to those of the Affghâns, and still more so by the red or white "caste-marks" which Caubul law compels them always to wear, like the mark upon Cain, and which are utter abomination to the followers of the Prophet. The street was just as noisy and as densely crowded as that through the other bazaar, and it was by no means easy to ride past the heavily-laden camels and ponies continually meeting us, especially the former, which are not only the ugliest but also the most obstinate of created animals, and have no more idea of getting out of one's way than a railway train or a perambulator.

Close to the western end of the Shôr Bazaar is a courtyard entirely occupied by dyers plying their exceedingly dirty-looking trade, and festooned all round the walls with freshly dipped and dripping strips of cotton or woollen fabrics. I think I must have suffered baptism here, for I find this entry in my note book under the description of the dyers' yard: "N.B. Take an umbrella here."

Not far from the dyers' yard, up a narrow alley,

is the only place where fermented liquor is procurable, and that only *sub rosâ*. Several descriptions are sold here under the general title of "shurâb"—wine. Some bear a distant resemblance to cheap and nasty Marsala, while others are like the most fiery "military port." The strongest vintage of all has a mixed flavour of gin, vinegar, and methylated spirits, and reminded me of an awful concoction sold in Tyrolese villages under the name of "Iva."

A building lying between the dyers' premises and the Great Bazaar was afterwards used as a dispensary for the inhabitants of the city, and was extensively patronised, particularly by sufferers from ophthalmia. The number of eye-shades worn under the turbans showed the prevalence of this disease. The dispensary was presided over by Dr. Owen, and the Affghâns really did seem to appreciate the attentions and medicines they received, though of course the fact of both being given gratis had even more attraction for the patients than the efficacy of the remedies employed.

I heard of many peculiar subjects on which the Doctor was consulted, and his aid was as often invoked for a favourite horse or a pet hawk as for a sick man or a purblind child.

The following day I received a visit from another Kizil Bâsh named Nusrut Jung, who had also been in Hodson's Horse. He confirmed Ibrahim Khân's statement regarding the ex-Ameer's conduct on the fatal 3rd of September, but could give no further details. He was handsomely dressed in a fine Astrachan sheepskin hat and a purple velvet robe embroidered in gold, and showing a green undervest of silk, also embroidered; but the Oriental magnificence was somewhat marred by an English shirt, with coloured glass studs, a very limp "stick-up" collar and a brilliant mauve tie! I went with him to see the "Chandole," as the Kizil Bâsh quarter is named. I found this was a collection of well-built comfortable looking houses in the south-western angle of the city, towards Dêh Muzung.

The people were, as usual with the Kizil Bâshis, most civil and hospitable, every householder we

met offering tea and fruit. The Chandole is capable of isolation from the rest of the city, being walled and gated off from the neighbouring streets. It has been several times attacked, but the Persians have always held their own, as they did soon after my visit when attacked by Mahomed Jân's troops and the Kohistânis.

On the 24th, Neville went out to a large village beyond Bîn-i-Hissar for forage, and returned two days afterwards, having taken up his quarters meantime in a gorgeous "bâra durri," or summer-house, each room of which was painted pink, green, blue, yellow, or some other lively colour, and lighted by stained glass windows, the tint of the latter forming the strongest possible contrast to the colour of the walls, as usual.

The following day I went with General Massy to look up the horse-dealers in the purlieus of the city. We visited several of their stables, which are built on the same plan as all others in Caubul, with the floor sunk below the level of the ground, and a small triangular aperture in the wall in front of the manger. This is the only means of

admitting light and air during the winter, when the door is kept fast closed. The natural consequence is that the stable, frequently containing twenty horses or more, is never properly cleaned, and in addition to many other ill effects arising from this unhealthy hibernation, the poor beasts' eyes become affected, and almost all freshly purchased animals are most unpleasantly, and often incurably addicted to shying. As a rule the ponies are much better than the horses, the latter being generally heavy-shouldered, fiddle-headed brutes, the exceptions almost always on inquiry proving to be either Turkomân, or Persian with a strain of the Arab.

Sunday, the 26th of October, was a quiet day and service was held in the headquarters camp. On Monday I moved down to Sherpore cantonments, taking a troop with me, to take over charge and superintend the cleansing and marking out of the barracks and ground allotted to the regiment for winter quarters. Sherpore was commenced by the late Ameer Sher Ali, who named it after himself, contrary to the usual Affghân custom

which gives to newly built villages, forts, &c., the name of the father of the actual architect.

It is in the form of a rectangular parallelogram, the longer sides measuring two thousand six hundred and fifty yards, or a little over a mile and a half, while the ends are about one thousand yards long. The side facing south, towards the city, is formed of a range of flat-roofed barracks, with staircases between every two barracks on to the roof, on the outer edge of which is a parapet six feet high, with a banquette to fire from ; in front of this runs a ditch, dry now, twenty feet wide, and then comes the outer defence, a mud wall sixteen feet high, broken at intervals by large semicircular bastions with three gun-embrasures in each, a very narrow banquette running some five feet below the crest. The ground immediately outside this wall is cut up by holes and trenches from which the earth forming it has been dug. The barrack rooms are ninety feet long by sixteen wide, and on each side of the staircases is a small room measuring fifteen feet by sixteen. There are four fireplaces in the large rooms, two

at each end, and one in each of the small quarters. Three of the barracks and four of the small rooms were allotted to us, of course not nearly enough for the whole regiment. On the northern, or inner side of the barracks runs a verandah twelve feet wide, with pillars and arches of burnt brick—all the rest is mud.

In front of the verandah is a narrow path, rendered almost impassable in many places by the encroachments of pits and ditches similar to those above-mentioned, and mostly full of stagnant water. At intervals of seven hundred yards are three gateways, and in the centre of the western face is a fourth. These are large archways with double-storied quarters on each side, and flat roofs with a dome over the archway; outside each is a semicircular wall, with a gateway at right-angles to the arch. The northern side of Sherpore is formed by a low range of stony hills called the Bimâroo Ridge, rising three hundred feet above the plain at its highest point.

Nearly in the centre of this ridge is "The Gorge," a sloping gap, or "Kotul" on a small scale, guarded

by a circular stone block-house on the inner side. At the north-eastern corner of the enclosure, and on the eastern slope of this ridge is the village of Bimâroo, near which were our cantonments during our occupation of Caubul in 1842. The length of the ridge is about two thousand yards. It had been Sher Ali's intention to carry the fortifications and barracks completely round this hill, and to crown his *magnum opus* with a royal palace on its crest.

The eastern and western faces are lower and weaker than that towards the city, and the end of the latter abutting on the ridge had been much damaged by the explosion on the 7th of October previously mentioned. At the foot of the northern slope of the Bimâroo Ridge were several small villages and ruined walls, then a belt of cultivation, much intersected with deep ditches, and at a distance of one to one and a half miles, at the base of the southern Kohistân hills, is a long lake about half a mile wide, usually covered with wild fowl. The shores of this lake are of very fine nitrous sand, extending for some distance at the eastern

end, dazzling one's eyes and tiring one's horse to a most unpleasant degree.

I pitched my little camp on a piece of ground between the portions set apart for ourselves and our neighbours, the 12th Bengal Cavalry, and at once set to work cleaning the barracks, and otherwise rendering them habitable, receiving valuable and most cordially given advice and assistance from Captain Dundas of the Engineers, who was superintending the works. He had earned his Victoria Cross in Bhootân, and would have received fresh honours for this campaign had he lived, but he was unfortunately killed by the premature explosion of a mine on the 23rd of December. In him we lost one who was as modest and unassuming as he was gallant and resourceful.

The ensuing week was one of few events, but real hard work; not only was I continually covered with dust from head to foot, till I looked like a navvy just come out of a railway tunnel, but my tongue got so twisted from attempting to give directions in their own language to the Pushtoo-

speaking workmen, that I really thought I should be obliged to have it taken out and ironed!

I managed to obtain some panes of glass from the Bâlâ Hissar, and a variety of doors, shutters, and planks from that and other sources, and set three Caubuli carpenters to work to make frames for them, and fit them into the apertures in the walls. The smaller quarters were tiled with flat square bricks from some kilns in the enclosure, shelves were put up, and the whole inside of the building whitewashed. Meantime, the dooly-bearers attached to the regimental hospital built walls eight feet high in most of the verandah arches, so as to make a shelter for the tents which would have to be pitched there in order to eke out the scanty accommodation.

On the 1st of November, silver having run short, pay began to be issued to the troops in Persian gold coins called *tillas*, from "tilla," meaning "gold." They were the size but not half the thickness of a sovereign, and their actual value was seven and a quarter rupees, but this was arbitrarily raised to eight rupees. The only

people to whom this made any difference were ourselves, as the city tradesmen at once raised their prices considerably more than proportionately.

On Monday, the 3rd of November, that much-dreaded scourge "Loodiâna disease," made its appearance amongst the horses of the 12th Bengal Cavalry, close to whom I was encamped, and as it is as infectious as it is deadly, I at once moved my men outside the Sherpore enclosure altogether, and encamped on a good dry piece of ground in front of our barracks, *i.e.* between Sherpore and the city.

A lot of horses of all sorts had been found in the Ameer's stables, and orders were issued for their distribution amongst the Cavalry Regiments to replace casualties, so on the 4th, representatives of each corps met at the exercising ground in front of the stables, which were close to Sherpore, and I chose half-a-dozen of the least screwed, which were sent down to the regiment.

Next day the rest of the regiment moved over from the Siah Sung encamping ground, and

joined me in the front of Sherpore, and all available men were set to work at the barracks.

On Tuesday the 11th of November we had the first snow-storm; it was very light, but accompanied by a bitterly cold wind. None of our men had ever seen snow except on the distant mountain peaks, and they were considerably astonished at it. Before we left Caubul they became better acquainted with the vagaries of Jack Frost.

CHAPTER XII.

FUTILE ATTEMPT TO TRAP A CHIEF COMMISSIONER.—BOARD AND LODGINGS GRATIS.—A MIXED BAG.—A MYSTERIOUS BOX.—PERSIAN GENTLEMAN'S COUNTRY HOUSE.—THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

On the 12th of November we all moved into Sherpore, leaving the ground outside clear for the 9th Lancers, whose headquarters had now arrived, bringing with them a very much larger amount of baggage and camp equipage than we had been alllowed. At first grumbles loud and deep were heard at this, but they were very soon stifled by the warm-hearted kindness and thorough *bonne camaraderie* shown to all by this magnificent regiment.

We all soon shook down in our new quarters,

though at first it did feel strange to have a roof over one's head instead of the canvas substitutes which had been our only coverings for more than ten months. The time passed quietly, varied by occasional visits to the city, until the 16th, when I received a note from the Chief of the Staff asking me to come over at once with twenty men, "stripped saddles," *i.e.* no horse clothing, poshteens, nor cloaks. I found he wanted me to go out after the Loïnâb of Kohistân, who was reported to be in a village six miles off, with a quantity of valuable property, with which he was endeavouring to make off.

It was now 3 P.M., and my instructions were to go out as fast as possible, catch the Loïnâb, and bring him and his treasure back to Sherpore. "Loïnâb," I may here explain, is a Pushtoo official title, answering to our "Chief Commissioner." Ibrahim Khân and another Kizil Bâsh swell were to accompany me. We started at a good swinging trot, which fully taxed the powers of my guides' horses, and covered quite six miles without drawing rein ; I then pulled up to a walk,

and asked how much further we might have to go? Imagine my disgust when they told me I had not come halfway yet!

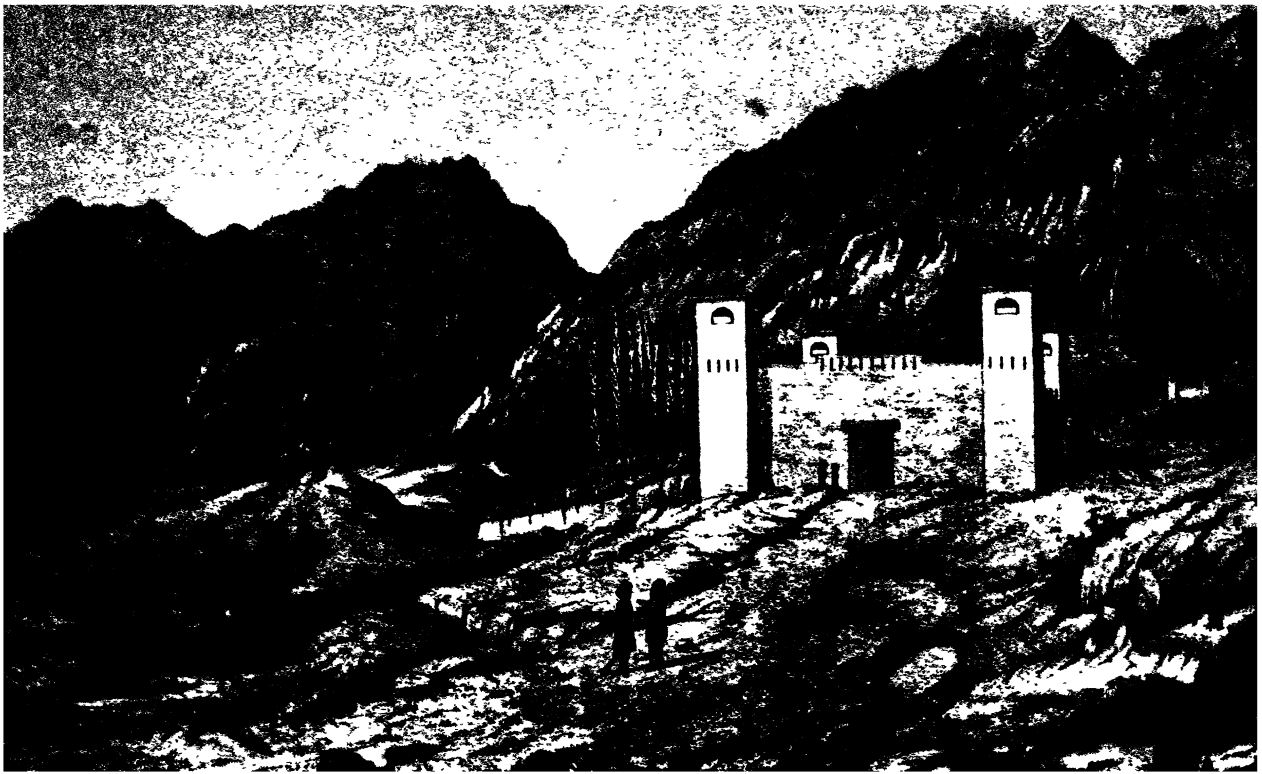
We now left the Ghuznee road, which we had been following, and striking northwards across country, arrived after a ride of eleven or twelve miles at a small hamlet where we halted to gain information. The headman of this place was the spy on whose report we had been sent out, but unfortunately he had already received his reward, and I consequently found it quite impossible to obtain any reliable story from him. He had evidently changed his mind as to betraying the Loïnâb, and after leading us on a wild goose chase about the country till the sun got low in the west, and he thought we should probably be obliged to retrace our steps to Sherpore, he finally brought us back to the village at which we had found him, where he composedly seated himself, declaring he knew nothing whatever of the Loïnâb, in short, had never heard his name even! This was too trying for Ibrahim Khân's temper, and he began to administer a sound thrashing with his native whip.

I stopped this at once, but the shrieks and screams of the women who were looking on from the top of an adjoining house gave me another idea, which I at once put into execution. Making Ibrahim Khân explain that the spy's life was forfeit for having given false information, and that unless he at once made amends for his bad conduct by pointing out what I required, he would be hung, I allowed five minutes' grace, at the expiry of which some of my men dismounted, and fastening one end of a picketing rope round the prisoner's neck, threw the other over a tree, and enacted an execution tableau with much realistic effect. As I expected, this brought the whole bevy of women to my feet, and their entreaties, coupled with a wholesome fear of being *really* hung next time, induced our friend to show us a hiding-place behind his own grain-stores from which we extracted a lot of arms and baggage, and he then led us in a perfectly new direction towards the Kohistân mountains.

We now crossed a deep ravine, forded a beautifully clear stream bubbling over moss-grown

rocks into cool shady hollows, and passed through groves of poplars, their autumn-tinted foliage golden in the rays of the setting sun, the fallen leaves crackling crisply under our horses feet, and reminding me of many a well-known spinney in far-distant England. On emerging from the woods we found ourselves at the foot of the hills, in the fruitful undulating tract locally known as "Pughmân."

About a mile in front of, and above us, was a high-walled village, with towers at each end of its four angles, surrounded by orchards and vineyards, and looking exceedingly prosperous and comfortable. I sent on scouts, who went round the village and reported all clear, so we rode up to the gateway. All was silent, and the heavy iron-clamped and nail-studded doors were fast closed. After listening for a minute I heard people moving inside, so I made Ibrahim Khân tell them to open the gates. After a little delay the bolts were drawn by a female urchin about a yard high, who informed us that papa and mamma, with all the other grown up folk, had left early that after-



noon, and had carried the baggage of a "great man," who had slept in the village the previous night, over the hills to the westward.

This we found to be quite true, the Loïnâb was the "great man," and, the village being in his district, all the adult inhabitants had followed him, the men as soldiers and the women as porters, into the higher mountains, where he ultimately joined Abdool Rahmân. They had left five children, too heavy to carry and too small and weak to march, to fall into our hands. Lucky that the case was not reversed! The interior of the village, or fort, was divided into four separate quarters, that into which the gate opened was the cattle-yard, in which we picketed the horses; on the left was the guest-house, with locked doors. On breaking them open I found an immense heap of miscellaneous property left for want of sufficient time or carriage to remove it. It was too late to examine this that evening, so I despatched two sowars with a note to the Chief of the Staff, asking him to send out every available baggage animal next morning. I then issued bedding and horse-

clothing from the captured stores, and placed a sentry over the door of the guest-house.

In the next court we found a comfortable house, of which I took possession; also twenty-one fat sheep of the *doombah*, or fat-tailed species common in Caubul, and in the corner tower was a large store of grain, flour, and dried lucerne grass, so a feed of barley and lucerne was given to the horses, and flour, salt, and a couple of sheep to the men. Having ascertained by a careful search that only the children had remained behind, and that the poor little wretches had plenty of food and bedding, the men rubbed down their horses, guards were posted at the main gate and the only other entrance, a small postern in my quarter, and all hands proceeded to make a hearty meal. I had a first-rate dinner (cooked for me "by special request" by Ibrahim Khân and his friend), consisting of lamb kibâbs, an excellent rice and milk pudding, with grape jam, Caubul bread, and capital fresh butter, of which my orderly discovered a goodly supply, and at the same time lit upon a large leather "cooper" full of *ghee*, or

clarified butter—that abomination to a European, but ambrosia to an Asiatic. I believe the men enjoyed this more than anything else, for they had received a very scanty allowance since starting, and were soon to lose even that meagre quantity. Frequently during the ensuing winter I heard them say that with a regular supply of ghee and an occasional tot of rum they would not mind the cold and exposure a bit.

Officer, men, and horses being now pretty comfortable, both inside and out, I paid a visit to the sentries, and then turned in between beautiful Bokhâra silk quilts, spread on a large native bedstead. I greatly dreaded unwelcome visitors in my improvised couch, but it fortunately proved to be free from insect life, and the only disturbers of my rest were the cats, who held high holiday all night, some of the more enterprising even carrying their gambols on to my bed, and I was more than once awakened by a weight flopping on to my chest, and when I opened my eyes I saw a pair of phosphorescent green orbs fixed on me with a mesmeric glare.

I took one of these opportunities to visit the sentries. It was 3 A.M., and a most brilliant moonlight night. Every leaf of the trees, every peak of the hills stood out clearly and sharply-defined against the steel-grey sky, in which not a single cloud was visible, and the stillness was only broken by the occasional rattling of a chain rein, or the regular champing sound of a horse who had roused himself to take another mouthful of toothsome lucerne. I did not find all so peaceful on my return, for on opening my door a huge "Tom" made a rush between my legs, but here too the glorious moonlight aided me, for by its assistance I was enabled to deliver a hearty kick with such precision as to send the interloper whirling through the air to the opposite side of the courtyard. Having thus reasserted British supremacy in Affghânistân, I returned to my couch and slept the sleep of the virtuous.

Next morning a guard of one of the Punjâb Infantry regiments made its appearance, escorting a hundred and twenty camels and seventy-three mules and *yâboos*, or baggage ponies. These were

loaded as soon as possible, and at noon they started for Sherpore, with orders to return next morning. Our "loot" consisted of china, crockery, bedding, tents, arms, ammunition, cooking-pots, Samovars, plated candlesticks with glass shades, Russian candles and sugar candy, and last, but most important, several boxes filled with Persian manuscripts, amongst which were found the muster rolls of the regiments implicated in the attack on Cavagnari's mission, some correspondence which was the death-warrant of several *soi-disant* friends, and a lot of note-paper stamped with the regimental badge of the Corps of Guides, which must have belonged either to Hamilton or Kelly.

My breakfast to-day was a repetition of last night's menu, with the addition of fried fish from a rivulet of beautifully clear spring water running through the vineyards just outside the walls. I busied myself and the men with preparing loads for the next lot of baggage animals and making a reconnaissance to the neighbouring villages, all of which I found either entirely deserted, or with so few inhabitants remaining that one could almost

apply the same term to them. All the villages in this Pughmân district appeared to be well and solidly built, the wood-work good and well finished, and the neighbouring lands carefully tilled and profusely irrigated. I was astonished at the amount of window-glass used in this remote corner of the world, and learnt afterwards that far the greater part of it was obtained from Russia, as being much cheaper than that imported from India.

Early next morning, after a night in no way differing from the previous one, dinner, cats, and moonlight included, the baggage animals returned in increased numbers, and were quickly packed and started with the ready-prepared loads. I accompanied them as far as the first village visited on the 16th, and saw the property found there also packed. This consisted, amongst other things, of two huge Russian Samovars, and a very heavy and mysterious flat box, about seven feet by five, and eight inches deep, strongly clamped with iron, in addition to being securely screwed down. This could not be packed on a camel, so I had to im-

press all the villagers I could find to carry it to Sherpore. This was eventually accomplished by a system of reliefs at each village, and I was in great hopes that the case would be found to contain the jewels, or at any rate the specie, with which the Loïnâb was said to be provided, and of which we had hitherto discovered no trace.

After seeing the last of my convoy fairly under weigh, I took my own men across the Ghuznee road to another village, in which it was possible we might obtain some news of the Loïnâb, but on reaching it we found it inhabited by Kizil Bâshis. They were as hospitable as usual, and the headman insisted on taking me over his house (which he had just finished and of which he was very proud,) while the inevitable tea-tray was being prepared. The house was beautifully clean, the principal rooms large and lofty, lighted by plain glass windows with fanlights of coloured glass above them and the doors; the floors were of nicely planed pine planks, covered with new bright coloured rugs and carpets; and the walls were whitewashed, with oil lamps and glass shades of

Russian manufacture on brackets at frequent intervals. I asked the owner if I could do anything for him in return for his civility? He said no, unless I would do him the honour to mention him as a well-wisher of the British on my return to Sherpore, which of course I did.

We then turned our faces homewards, and reached the cantonments without any further adventures.

Next day, there being nothing particular to do, the mysterious heavy flat box which I had sent in was carefully opened in the presence of an expectant crowd, which had assembled to gloat over the Loïnâb's carefully packed treasure. One by one the strong fastenings gave way beneath the armourer's powerful tools, and at length, after some minutes of breathless suspense, the last clamp was forced, the last screw drawn, and the weighty lid was raised to expose—a looking-glass! and a very bad one too!

I retired from the scene.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPEDITION TO MAIDÂN.—THE NATIVE SIGNALLER.—UNDER FIRE AGAIN.—THE EMPTY NEST.—"ST. ANDREW'S DAY."—AN UNLUCKY SHOT.—RETURN TO SHERPORE.—DISTURBING RUMOURS.

On the 20th nothing happened, but on Friday the 21st we accompanied a force* under General Baker which proceeded along the Ghuznee road, halting for the night at the village of Argundêh, thirteen miles from Sherpore. Next day we marched to Maidân, a collection of villages at the head of the valley which we had entered more to the south on the 13th of October.

Our object was twofold—first, to collect forage

* One squadron 9th Lancers, two squadrons 14th Bengal Lancers, five hundred 92nd Highlanders, four hundred 3rd Sikh Infantry, four hundred 5th Punjâb Infantry, three guns G. 3 R.A., two guns Mountain Battery.

and supplies; and secondly, to check the machinations of a local chieftain named Bahâdur Khân, who had been endeavouring to raise his people, occupying a lateral branch of the Maidân valley, against us.

The second day's march was about the same distance, but infinitely more tedious; the ground, always uneven and rocky, was now frequently intersected by ravines, and proved most trying to the poor horses of the Field Battery. In several places double teams had to be employed, the gunners spoking the wheels, and clearing away the stones as much as possible, and even then great difficulty was experienced in getting the guns along. At length, after a wearisome march, we arrived at Maidân, and encamped on open ground facing west, *i.e.* towards the entrance of Bahâdur Khân's valley.

The next few days were fully occupied in collecting supplies, but on Wednesday, the 26th, information reached General Baker that the rebel chief had left the mountains to which he had retreated on first hearing of our approach, and

had again descended to his villages in the valley, so the Cavalry immediately started to try and catch him. On the left (south) was a range of high rocky hills, and as we pushed along at a trot the Sergeant-Major in rear of the squadron of the 9th, which was leading, directed my attention to one of the peaks, and asked me to look at it through my glasses. I did so, and easily made out a man perched on the very topmost point, frantically waving a white cloth. I immediately told the Colonel, who halted the column while we all had a good look. As soon as he saw us halt, the signaller—for such he undoubtedly was—ceased waving his cloth and sat down, but the instant we moved on he sprang up and recommenced his gesticulations.

We now rounded the spur on the crest of which he stood, and passing some villages which were quite quiet, and appeared half-deserted, approached what was evidently the capital of the valley. Here we saw a knot of men at the gateway with arms glistening, and as soon as we got within three hundred yards they all rushed inside, the gates

were shut, and a sharp volley was sent at us from the loop-holed walls.

It would, of course, have been utter madness to attack a fortified village with only Cavalry, so the 9th Lancers made a *détour* to the right while we went off to the left. The first volley had gone over our heads, but the enemy continued to fire merrily, and as each field was from two to four feet higher than the last, we soon came under fire, and a man of my squadron was knocked over. Dr. Mawson and I dismounted to help him, and on taking off his sword-belt and unfastening his poshteen we found that, though the bullet had penetrated it, it had gone no further, so the sowar was *quitte pour la peur.*

We halted at about fifteen hundred yards from the village, but even at that distance the bullets fell amongst us or hissed overhead, and we only waited there till we could see the dust raised by the 9th Lancers retiring on their side. They soon rejoined us, and we found that they had been less fortunate than ourselves, having lost three horses killed by the enemy's fire.

We retired about a mile and a half, and halted at a village on the Maidân road, whence a letter was sent to General Baker reporting progress, and proposing to surround the chief village at dawn the next morning, and keep the occupants at bay till he could arrive with Infantry and guns.

Meanwhile we made our arrangements for a night bivouac. However, these were not needed, for just at sunset came an order for our immediate return, which we obeyed very unwillingly, feeling sure that our prey would escape. We reached camp at 9 P.M., after some very narrow escapes from serious accidents on the thickly frozen water-courses and almost equally slippery paths.

Early next morning, the 27th, we again started, only leaving enough Infantry in camp to strike the tents and store them in a neighbouring village in case another party of the enemy should make a counter-attack during our absence, as they had threatened to do.

Having Infantry with us our pace was necessarily much slower than the day before, so I ventured to propose that the Cavalry should

gallop ahead and cut off the line of retreat. This was negatived, and the natural result ensued.

Our friend was at his post on the peak, signalling away more vigorously than ever, this time using a red cloth as well as a white one.

On coming in sight of the large village we saw a low hill on the other side of it covered with people, who rapidly disappeared in the gorges of the higher range, and our troops only captured the cage from which the birds had flown. We then destroyed all Bahâdur Khân's villages, and left the valley full of smoking ruins and blazing stacks. On our return we re-pitched the camp, which had not been threatened during our absence, and the task of collecting supplies and forage was resumed.

We found the cold at night very trying, especially for the sentries, but it added to our amusements during the day, when we had time for any, and sliding now took its place with rounders and prisoners' base in our programme of afternoon diversions.

On the 28th General Baker went with an escort

of the 9th Lancers in the direction of Killa Doorâni, where we had found the twelve guns. While he and his staff and escort were dismounted and feeding their horses they were fired on by about a hundred men. The escort returned the fire, knocking over four, and then the two parties mutually retired.

At this season the part of the country we were now encamped in had a most barren appearance, though the contents of the village granaries showed what a change summer must bring. Hills, rocks, trees, and fields were equally brown and bare, one uniform dead brown, with no relief except where a white sheet or glistening ribbon marked the frozen expanse of a swamp, or course of a stream ; or a knot of scarlet and white pennons showed a party of the 9th or our own men returning from foraging, accompanied by a string of laden animals.

The 30th of November was of course a great day with such a thoroughly Highland regiment as the 92nd, but not a drop of whisky or even rum was procurable to toast St. Andrew with,

so the Scottish martyr had to suffer fresh torments in seeing his pious followers condemned to commemorate him in tea! They managed to be very jolly, notwithstanding the absence of the "wee drappie," dancing strathspeys and making fiendish noises on the bagpipes to their hearts' content, and to the great amusement of their many friends, for this magnificent regiment was as popular as it was gallant.

Next day we returned to Argundêh, and as it was considered by no means unlikely that we might be harassed on the road, the Cavalry was ordered not to leave the ground till three hours after the rest of the force. While we were sitting waiting for the call "to horse," a shot was fired close by, and a bullet came singing over our heads. Some natives attached to the "political officer" (we had one of these utterly superfluous impediments with us) were sitting about a hundred yards off, and seeing smoke rising, and a commotion among them, we ran up and found one of them shot through the body by a companion, who had been playing tricks with

his rifle. The poor creature was attended to, and carried into the Sherpore hospital, but he died a few days afterwards.

We reached Argundêh, and the following day, Sherpore, without any more occurrences worthy of note.

On Wednesday the 3rd of September, a new subaltern joined us from the 3rd Hussars, Lieutenant Forbes, but we had not time to know him well, as the poor young fellow was killed eight days afterwards.

Winter having now thoroughly set in, skating and snow-balling took the place of paper-chases and rounders, and all looked forward to a quiet and somewhat slow cold season. A club was proposed, a theatre commenced, and a masonic lodge talked of, but other and more exciting pastime was in store for us, and was even now in course of preparation, though as yet we knew nothing of it.

On Monday, the 8th, there was a general parade for the gratification of a party of officers who had come to see Caubul—a sort of military

"cheap trippers," or "Cook's Tourists." Directly this was over two squadrons of the 14th Bengal Lancers were ordered to Huft Shuhr, on the west of Caubul, news having been received of a threatened advance of the Kohistânis from that quarter. My squadron having been last detached, remained in Sherpore, while those above-mentioned were attached to a brigade* commanded by General Macpherson, which was ordered to march by the now well-known road to Argundêh, there to await the advance of the enemy. The following morning another column† was despatched from Sherpore under General Baker, with the supposed object of cutting off the enemy's retreat when met by General Macpherson. This latter column took the Châdêh route Next day, the 10th of

* Four guns F.A., R.H.A., four guns No. 1 Mountain Battery; one squadron 9th Lancers, two squadrons 14th Bengal Lancers; six companies 67th Regiment, 3rd Sikh Infantry, 5th Goorkhas.

† Four guns No. 2 Mountain Battery; four hundred and fifty men 92nd Highlanders; four hundred and fifty men 5th Punjab Infantry; twenty-five Sappers and Miners; two and a half squadrons 5th Punjab Cavalry.

December, the ball opened, and continued with few pauses until the 24th. During this period all had plenty of hard work, sharp fighting, and continued excitement, in all of which the Cavalry Brigade had a full share.

CHAPTER XIV.

OPERATIONS IN CHÂRDÊH.—LOSS OF THE GUNS.—MARTYRS TO DUTY. — A PRETTY STORY! — A DISAGREEABLE DUTY. — THE BITER BIT. — THE CROSS IN THE HEAVENS. — PICQUET.—FIGHTING ON TUKET-I-SHÂH.—CAVALRY OUT AGAIN.

EARLY on the morning of the 11th of December, General Massy, who was at Killa Owshâr with a portion* of the Cavalry and Horse Artillery, was ordered to march at 9 A.M. to join General Macpherson on the Ghuznee road. Killa Owshâr is near the foot of the small Kotul of the same name, over which the Argundêh road runs, and is on the northern edge of the Châredêh Valley.

This valley is intersected in every direction by

* Four guns F.A., R.H.A., two squadrons 9th Lancers, one squadron 14th Bengal Lancers.

hemmed in on the left by precipitous rock, and on the right by a deep and broad watercourse, which we had to cross twice by rough bridges formed of unhewn slabs of stone. Fortunately the most timid or skittish horses were far too tired to think of shying, or we might have had some bad accidents in the dark, for these bridges were overshadowed by weeping willows and other trees, so that we lost even the small benefit of the starlight. After some distance the road turned sharply to the right, under a lofty building, and crossing a particularly uncomfortable hog-backed bridge, we entered the city of Caubul.

We soon found ourselves in total darkness, threading our way through one of the two great bazaars, which are roofed in as a protection from the weather. We now saw evidences of a friendly feeling, for every here and there a man or child—invariably Hindoo, be it observed—would come out holding an oil lamp to show us the way, or a hand, evidently a woman's, would be pushed through a peep-hole in the curtains of the upper story with a light for the same purpose, or *possibly*

to gratify feminine curiosity. There were several Caubulis sitting on the platforms in front of the now closed shops, who favoured us with a diabolical scowl of hatred and defiance, of which no notice was taken, save an occasional significant inclination of a revolver-muzzle in the direction of the ill-looking ruffians.

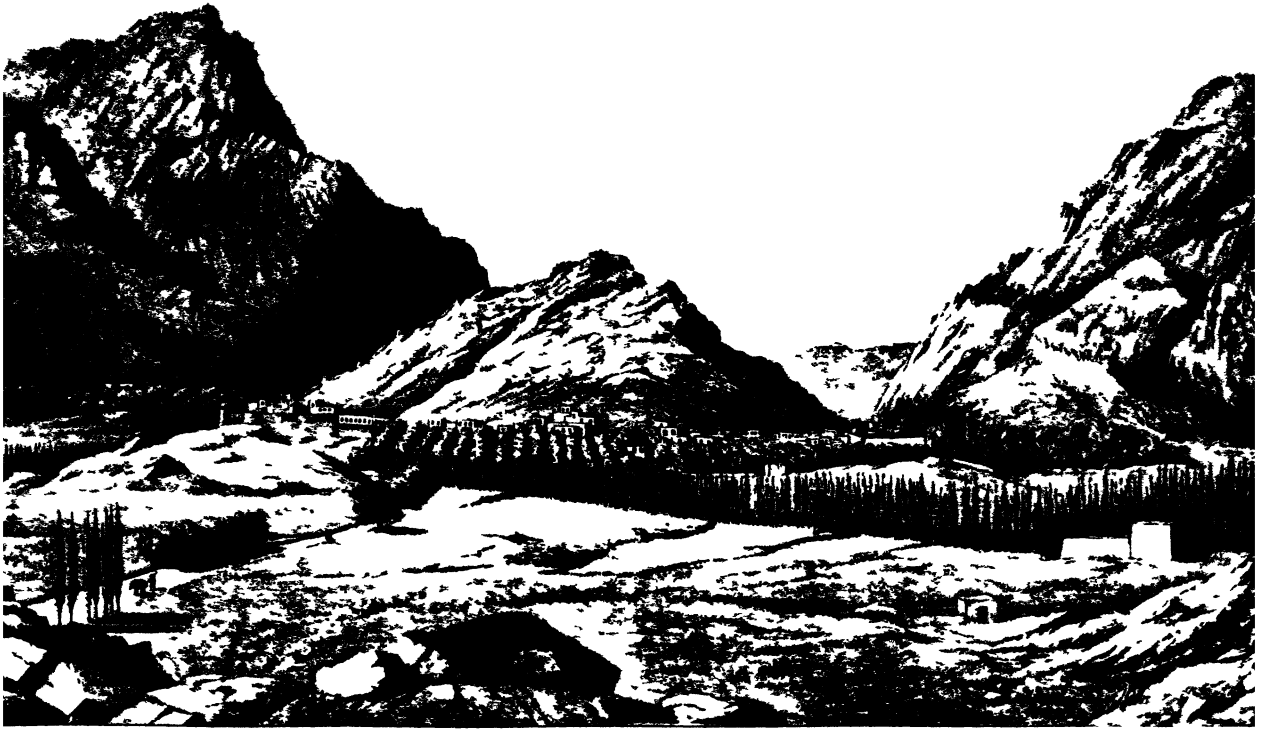
We frequently remarked afterwards, when we began to know the city well, that though many of the children were almost beautiful, they yet contrived to develope into most villainous-looking scoundrels — Shylock, Caliban, and Sycorax his dam, all have numerous representatives, though I think the first is the commonest type, on account of the decidedly Jewish cast of most Caubulis' features, and the low cunning and cruelty which supplies the only animation in their otherwise stolid countenances, true indices of the mind beneath—fatalist by creed, false, murderous, and tyrannical by education. In this description I do not include the Kizil Bâsh (Persian) or Khuttri (Hindoo) settlers, who preserve their own distinctive features, both mental and physical.

But to return from this digression to my story. After passing through the Great Bazaar we came upon some fruit-sellers' shops, open and lighted, and a wonderful sight they seemed to us then, though we soon became accustomed to them. *Piles* of grapes (I use the expression in its fullest sense) of all shapes, colours, and sizes, from the deepest black to the palest and most transparent amber, and from the tiny "bê-dana" or "seedless"—a white grape the size of a black currant, and which is eaten "off the bunch," currant fashion—to the great "Ungoor," as large or even larger than the top joint of a man's thumb. Apples, red, yellow, green, and russet. Pears, green and yellow. Red-brown pomegranates. Yellow dates and quinces. Deep green watermelons, interspersed with immense cauliflowers, and beetroots as large as a leg of spring lamb. The whole illuminated by the brilliant white glare of the oil-cressets, making a picture as unexpected as it was refreshingly beautiful.

We soon left this Eastern Covent Garden behind, and passing out of the city by the eastern

or "Peshawur" gate, as it is called, found that during our absence the *locale* of the Cavalry Brigade camp had been changed from Bin-i-Hissar to a tract of ploughed land under and to the east of the Siah Sung range, the plateau on the top of which was covered with the camps of the Infantry Brigades and the Field and Mountain Batteries, the Horse Artillery remaining with us below.

Thoroughly tired by the time we reached camp, we were glad to find that Neville had had our tents pitched, and that all was ready for turning in, an operation which did not occupy much time.



CHAPTER VI.

SIAH SUNG.—THE PUBLIC ENTRY —THREE CHEERS FOR THE EMPRESS — EXPEDITION TO BRING IN GUNS —A NIGHT ALARM.—STONY MATTRASSES.—KILLA DOORÂNI.

FRIDAY, the 10th of October, was a day of rest, much needed both by man and beast, and we did nothing but loiter about our own and the Infantry camps, amusing ourselves with listening to "Tommy Atkins" chaffering for fruit with the itinerant vendors, who must have reaped a considerable harvest of small coin.

Next day, the 11th, General Roberts had a look at the Bâlâ Hissar, while Wilmot took a small party of our regiment across the river (which he had some difficulty in crossing, through having a bad guide), and brought in a rebel general, Suffur

ood-Deen Khân by name, who had fought against us, and therefore, nominally against his sovereign, at Châr Asiâb. This man did his best to buy himself off by turning "King's evidence," but as it was afterwards discovered that he gave quite as much information to the enemy as he did to us, he was executed. He was very well treated while a prisoner in our Quarter-Guard. A servant was appointed to attend upon and cook for him, while Colonel Ross sent him tea every morning and evening, and as much oftener as he liked to ask for it. In fact, throughout the war, to the best of my knowledge and belief, our prisoners were treated with the greatest consideration and kindness—treatment which their comrades by no means reciprocated.

On Sunday, the 12th of October, Sir F. Roberts was to make his public entry into the city. Early in the morning I, as Field Officer of the Day for the Cavalry Brigade, posted a chain of double vedettes at a distance of two miles round the camp and city, in case any parties should choose this occasion to make a rush and try to bag the

General. After reporting that this had been done to the General Officer of the Day, I took up my position under the Headquarters' flagstaff, which was planted on the highest point of Siah Sung, overlooking the main road to the city and Bâlâ Hissar, at which latter place there was a signalling party ready to communicate with General Roberts by heliograph if anything happened. Close by me stood the 12 o'clock gun—a captured muzzle-loader of Afghân manufacture, which our gunners had polished till it shone again. So bright was it that I heard a brawny Highlander give it as his "opeenion" that gold had been used in making it! I had a capital view of the procession, which started from the headquarters' camp at 10 o'clock, the Ameer's son riding on General Roberts' right hand. Yâkoob was to have gone himself, but he turned sulky at last, and pleaded indisposition. The procession passed down the heights, and along the road to the Bâlâ Hissar gate, the whole way being lined by our force in the fullest dress they could muster, the 9th Lancers leading, and being as usual conspicuous for smartness and soldierly

bearing. Each of the regiments lining the road saluted as the General approached, till at length he reached the gate of the Bâlâ Hissar; here he read a proclamation, reassuring the inhabitants, on the condition of their being good boys in future, and then took formal possession of the city in the name of Her Majesty. Then came a royal salute from the Horse Artillery, who were drawn up opposite the gate, followed by three cheers for the Queen-Empress. The procession then returned, the troops marched back to their respective camps, and the show terminated.

Not so the work, at least, as far as the 14th Bengal Lancers were concerned; for we had hardly reached our lines, and the vedettes had not had time to come in, ere we received orders to go out to the Maidân Valley beyond the point to which the pursuit had been pushed on the 9th, to search for and bring in some guns reported to have been abandoned by a body of Ghuznee troops who had started from that city to assist in "the annihilation of the Feringhees at Châr Asiâb," which was looked upon by all the country as a foregone con-

clusion. Some of the fugitives meeting them, however, told such a tale of our "overwhelming myriads" (trust an Affghân for a good mouth-filling lie !), that they had fairly turned tail, and made off as fast as possible, their guns and heavy baggage being "left till called for." They *were* called for, but not by the original owners.

We marched at 1 P.M., not hurrying over the villainously stony road, as we did not know what our horses might have to do before nightfall, and were besides repeatedly warned of the effects of over-riding by the half-devoured carcasses of the poor beasts which had been worked to death on the 9th ; we arrived at the foot of the Kotul-i-Tukht just as it got dark. Here we proposed to bivouac for the night, and had just halted and formed up preparatory to dismounting when a couple of the advanced guard returned to report that a large body of armed men was crossing the road in front. I at once took out a dismounted troop with their carbines, and soon plainly saw figures moving along the sky line. We advanced as quickly and quietly as possible up the stony

hill-side on our right front, but on reaching the crest nothing was visible, though we could hear the sound of many footsteps receding over the loose shingle. No reply was made to our repeated challenges, and all soon becoming quiet I returned to the regiment, leaving a few sentries to watch the road.

We waited for twenty minutes or half an hour, and then, all remaining perfectly still, decided on descending the other side of the Kotul to try and find a more sheltered place for our bivouac, as we were nearly cut in two by the high, bitterly cold wind blowing over the pass, which is more than eight thousand feet above the sea. We therefore followed the road down the western slope, and about a mile further on found a hollow tolerably protected from the breeze, in which we formed up, dismounted, and laid down on the stony ground, each officer and man with his arm through his horse's bridle. Having a happy faculty for going to sleep under the most untoward circumstances, I was wrapped in slumber almost immediately, only to be prematurely unwrapped again at about

2 A.M., when we were all startled by a terrific howling, and a call from one of the sentries for assistance. A party immediately went in the direction of the noise, and brought in a Caubuli sepoy, who made such a fearful row, yelling to his brethren to rescue him from the "Feringhee Kâfirs" ("Foreign Infidels," our usual *nom de guerre* in Affghânistân), that we were obliged to gag him, not knowing how many, nor how near, his said brethren might be. A distant shout or two was heard in reply, but no more, so in half an hour all but the sentries were asleep again.

Just before dawn, there being a bright moon, we girthed up and mounted, taking the prisoner with us, escorted by two of our own men, and in charge of one of our interpreters—Persian-speaking men of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, one of whom was attached to the commanding officer, and one to each squadron commander, for here in Caubul our Jâts* were as much foreigners, both in language and religion, as we ourselves were.

* The Jâts, of whom our regiment is almost entirely composed, are Hindoo descendants of the ancient Getæ.

We now made our way southwards along the Maidân Valley, watching the sun rising above the hill-tops, and not at all ungrateful for his warmth and light. Very soon after sunrise there was some shouting just behind, and we found that the prisoner had complained to the interpreter that he could not walk comfortably over the rough ground with his arms pinioned, so the latter had obligingly dismounted and unfastened the rope, in spite of the remonstrances of our men (who could do no more, the interpreter being a non-commissioned officer), one of whom was just coming to report the irregularity when the prisoner drew a bayonet from under his *pôshteen*, or sheep-skin coat, and twice tried to stab his foolish liberator. Fortunately the bayonet was blunt, and the interpreter's own pôshteen thick, so he escaped scot free. Not so the would-be murderer, who made off across country as hard as he could go, yelling to the people of a neighbouring village to assist him; but before he had crossed the next field our two men had overtaken him, and we had no more trouble with that prisoner.

I omitted to mention that when daylight came we found he was dressed in a dark-brown coat with red facings, which, coupled with the fact of his being armed with a Snider rifle, conclusively proved his connection with the "Urdul Pultun," or "Orderly Regiment," which had been most forward in the attack on the Residency, and all members of which were specially excluded from the amnesty, so we only saved the hangman a job.

Shortly after this little interlude we forded the Caubul river, here a stream of beautifully clear water, about twenty yards wide and from two to three feet deep. Just above the ford are the ruins of an old masonry bridge, originally consisting of three pointed arches, but that nearest the right bank alone remains intact, the others being in ruins, though, as their piers still stand firmly, a few logs, some earth and brushwood, all obtainable close by, would at once render the passage practicable. We followed the Ghuznee road along the right bank of the stream till we reached the village of Killa Doorâni, the headman of which

came out to meet us, accompanied by a "Kaptân" (Captain!) of the Affghân artillery, who not only surrendered himself, but offered to (and actually did!) do all he could for us. In a yard at the entrance of the village we found two complete batteries, one of twelve-pounder Armstrong field guns, breech-loaders, the other a rifled muzzle-loading mountain battery, both beautifully made, hardly to be distinguished from their English prototypes except by the Persian inscription and tiger's face (the Caubul badge adopted by Sher Ali in commemoration of his own name — "Sher," *i.e.* "Tiger"). We also found numerous tumbrils full of ammunition; and in one corner of the yard was a huge pile of military stores, comprising harness, gun-tackle, saddlery, tents, bugles, horse-clothing, and other *impedimenta.*

Half a mile off, on the bank of the stream, was a large newly-built enclosure in which we found all sorts of implements for repairing arms —the manufactory and gun-foundry are at Ghuznee, and are all on the pattern given by us to Sher Ali in and since 1869. He procured plenty

of "muster-patterns" from the same source, for we gave him a battery of Armstrongs and another of mountain guns at Umballa, supplementing them with frequent supplies of Enfields, and crowning the whole in 1875 by a present of five thousand Snider rifles from the Arsenal at Peshawur.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "KAPTÂN."—BIVOUAC.—AN AFFGHÂN DINNER.—EDIBLE PILLOWS.—RETURN TO CAUBUL.—DIFFICULTIES EN ROUTE.

On returning an hour later to Killa Doorâni we found all hands busy trying to get the guns out of the yard, over a stream, and on to the road. A large number of half-starved horses, ponies, and mules had been found. The flying enemy had taken the best, and the rest of the poor brutes had (as the "Kaptân" admitted), been penned up in an enclosure without food or water for more than forty-eight hours. When the gate was opened they made a rush for the neighbouring stream, the noise of which must have increased their sufferings to the tortures of Tantalus, and

we had the greatest difficulty in preventing over-drinking, from which several died in spite of our efforts.

Meantime some of our men had been prowling about the village, and now came to report that a cow had been freshly killed at the door of one of the largest houses. Of course this could only have one of two meanings. Our men, like all other orthodox Hindoos, regarded the cow (one of the incarnations of Vishnu,) as a sacred animal, so that this, in their eyes, desecration of the threshhold was either intended as an insult to their religious prejudices, or the holy blood had been spilt there to prevent them from entering the house. We judged it to be the latter, and accordingly in we went, revolvers in hand, as usual when visiting doubtful precincts. It was a large house, full of all sorts of things, mostly rubbish, with the exception of one room at the back in which a quantity of barley was stored, which we instantly appropriated for the horses. (N.B. We paid for it, and pretty heavily too.) While pulling down the piles of barley we suddenly came upon the mouth

of a small hollow or cave in the wall of the house, and curled up in this was another sepoy of the "Urdul Pultun," dressed in the same brown and red uniform, and armed with a Snider, just as our noisy friend of the morning had been. He was taken outside, and you may be sure we looked for his bayonet, which was found—not in the scabbard—but concealed under his coat; he also had forty rounds of balled cartridge in his pouch. As he had made no active resistance, we could not accede to the men's urgent request to be allowed to finish him on the spot, so he was taken back to camp, tried by the Military Commission, and eventually hung for having taken part in the attack on the Residency.

By this time evening was coming on, so Wilmot was despatched with a small escort to head-quarters to report verbally, and to request that elephants might be sent out to bring in the field guns, while I was to follow next morning with the mountain battery, loaded on such animals of the captured herd as we could make use of. We then made arrangements through the "Kaptân"

for a supply of fodder, which we obtained at equally exorbitant rates as those paid for the barley, and settled ourselves down in the village garden for another night's bivouac. It was proposed that we officers should occupy one of the houses, but we preferred not being separated from the men—perhaps a wholesome dread of insect enemies may also have exercised some influence over our decision.

The garden only just held us all, bipeds and quadrupeds, but the high walls effectually sheltered us from the cold night-wind, and rendered a surprise impossible; we got heaps of fodder (millet-stalks, as usual) to lie on, which seemed like beds of down after the uncompromisingly hard stones of the previous night's bivouac. But I must tell you about our dinner before I go to sleep.

Our friend the "Kaptân," and the "Mullick," or "head man" of the village had requested permission to provide a spread, which was granted, provided it was brought before dark, as we had no lights. We waited more or less impatiently

till sundown, when a messenger came to say it would not be ready for another hour, so we set to work on the contents of the picnic basket, which, with one of the mess servants, had accompanied us as usual on a camel; after this we all turned in, and were almost asleep when a procession was descried approaching under the trees, headed by the "Kaptân" carrying an immense tinned copper lamp with six oil burners. He was followed by the "Mullick" staggering under the weight of the principal dish, which proved to contain a very excellent fowl, "pillau," with its usual garniture of rice boiled in *ghee*, or clarified butter, flavoured with raisins, fried onions, cloves, cardamums and pistachio nuts. After this *pièce de resistance* came minor dignitaries carrying curry, rice, sweetmeats, almonds and raisins, and fresh fruit. At first all said they were too sleepy to eat, and grumbled at being disturbed, but the whiffs of the steaming pillau were irresistible, and first one and then another chrysalis unrolled itself, producing a half sleepy Britisher who began by saying, "It smells so good, I think I must have just a mouthful!"

and ended by making a very respectable meal, as if the picnic basket had never had any existence. The curry was a thoroughly Affghân production, quite different from its Indian namesake, being nearly half fruit and vegetables. This dish also was pronounced most excellent, and a capital cup of green tea, which for a wonder kept no one awake, formed the *chasse-gout* of the best dinner I ever ate cross-legged.

Our appetites having been thoroughly satisfied, all looked forward to a "real good night's rest," but alas, "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agee!" we had no sooner wrapped ourselves up and gone to sleep again, than our horses took it into their heads with the most fiendish perversity that the projecting portions of our improvised mattrasses must be much more toothsome than the ample supply of the same material already allotted to their special use, and so they proceeded to pull the long millet-stalks from under us, the "Peer" occasionally pausing in his amusement to assure me that it was only a bit of fun by rubbing his velvety nose on my cheek, or breathing

into my ear (I think he intended to whisper, but didn't quite know how!). Human nature could not stand this long, and I jumped up, using bad language to my faithful charger for the only time in his life, and, shortening his picket-rope so that he could only get at me with his heels, from which I knew I was quite safe, I was no longer disturbed by his ill-timed jokes.

At sunrise next morning we were hard at work, fitting cradles and pack-saddles on the wretched captured animals for the carriage of the mountain guns. Of course the frames were all "a world too wide for their shrunk" backs, but at last we got them all loaded after a fashion, and at noon I started on my return journey with an escort of forty men. In the meantime gangs of villagers had been making a hideous row while dragging the twelve-pounders and their waggons on to the road, but up to the time I left they had made very little progress, and it was certainly a case of "much cry and little wool." We had a most tiresome march, owing to the frequent slipping of the loads, for of course when this

happened to one animal the entire string had to halt, and by the time the first lop-sided load had been put straight, half-a-dozen others had slipped out of place, owing to the beasts' fidgetting and shaking themselves while halted. It seemed a very long way to the Kotul-i-Tukht, but at length we passed that breezy little eminence, and after meandering through the ravines and broken ground on the Caubul side, we reached the trees and watermill.

Here I met an officer of the Artillery, taking out elephants and gear for the field battery. I told him he would not be able to return that night, which was unwelcome news, as neither he nor his men had brought bedding nor rations. I got his gunners to pack my battery in rather better style than we had been able to accomplish, and started again on my slow and dreary march, not reaching the Dêh Muzung suburb till dark. I now had to decide whether to bivouac where I was, or push through the city to camp. Cold, hunger, and fatigue decided the question, and I pushed on through the lanes and

streets. Lights were again held out by dusky figures or mysterious hands, and on more than one occasion when a mule's load was knocked off in turning a corner too sharply, some neighbouring Khuttries would turn out and help to replace it.

Poor wretches! They paid dearly for their too openly shown partiality for us during the "dark days" of December.

At last I got the whole of my troublesome charge to the Peshawur Gate, but here another delay and more consequent trouble with shifted loads took place, for the native officer commanding the Infantry guard, who had the keys, sent word that he was "in bed, and could not come down to open the gate!" I had him brought down, and gave him such a "talking to" as he had probably never before experienced, winding up with a threat of blowing the gate open with one of the guns and placing him under arrest for causing an alarm in camp. Of course he was full of apologies, which I did not stop to listen to, but passing through the now open gate, took the guns to the

Artillery park, and reached camp at half past eleven to find the lights out and everyone asleep, an example I was not slow to follow, my little tent and tiny camp-bed seeming the height of luxury after the experiences of the two previous nights.

CHAPTER VIII.

GREAT EXPLOSION AT BÂLÂ HISSAR. — NARROW ESCAPES. — VISIT TO RESIDENCY.—AN UNRELIABLE CICERONE.

THE following day, Thursday, the 16th of October, was made memorable by the great explosion at the Bâlâ Hissar. It was a quarter to two o'clock, luncheon had just been ordered, and Neville and I, with some visitors from the 9th Lancers, were sitting in the mess tent directly facing the Bâlâ Hissar, and about fifteen hundred yards from it. We were chatting away about the recent expedition when someone (I think it was poor little Ricardo of the 9th) suddenly exclaimed, "My God! what's that?" and immediately following came a deep heavy roar. We looked up

and saw an extraordinary—I may say an appalling —sight. A dense column of smoke shot into the air from the upper magazine of the fortress, rising in an apparently solid mass for some two thousand feet, or more, when it spread out at the top like a gigantic dark-grey palm-tree, and remained in this shape, a heavy, opaque mass of the thickest smoke, for fully sixty seconds, totally unaffected by the bursting shells, exploding boxes of cartridges, and showers of stones and *débris* which continually broke through it. At last the rising wind gradually, but very slowly, drifted the column of smoke away, but the fire had got well hold of the magazine, and the explosion of boxes of ammunition continued at intervals for upwards of twelve hours.

We were not kept long waiting for news from the scene of the explosion, for Captain Broome of the 12th Bengal Cavalry came galloping into camp from that direction, and told us that it was the main magazine of the Ameer's arsenal which had blown up, and that Captain Shafto, R.A. (the Commissary of Ordnance), who was inspecting it

at the time, three Native officers of the 5th Goorkhas, who were counting pay for their men in a verandah near, and several Native soldiers, had been buried in the ruins.

Broome himself had a narrow escape. He was sitting in a small alcove, fortunately just outside the main gate of the Bâlâ Hissar, when the explosion took place ; he saw huge stones and masses of masonry driven past him through the archway with tremendous force, killing a man and two horses of the 5th Punjab Cavalry, who happened to be passing through at the moment. The 67th Foot, who were encamped in a garden inside the Bâlâ Hissar, ran a very good chance of being annihilated, for the heavy *débris* came crashing down amongst their tents in every direction, but, wonderful to relate, not a man was hurt. They were instantly removed, together with the rest of the troops, from the dangerous vicinity, as there was another magazine close at hand.

Of course there was an official inquiry into the origin of the disaster, but nothing transpired to throw any light on it, nor do I think it will ever

be known whether the explosion was accidental or the work of an enemy. Equally of course the wildest stories were circulated in camp, and it was a fine time for the alarmists and *gobemouches*. The only explanation I ever heard attempted was a widely circulated report that Shafto had been seen just before going into the magazine with a lighted pipe in his mouth, a quantity of loose powder lying round him, where it had been spilt by the Affghâns; but I only mention this report to express my own utter disbelief in it. It is contrary to the very commonest probability that an officer of his position and experience should have been guilty of such criminal carelessness and wilful disregard of the most ordinary precaution.

The following afternoon some of us went down to see the Bâlâ Hissar. Passing through the main gate, which is flanked by octagonal towers, and crowned by a "Nowbut-Khâna," or gallery for musicians, we entered a narrow street of squalid mud houses, and after winding through lanes, past stables, and occasionally catching a glimpse of a larger and better class of dwelling house, we

emerged on a small plateau with the ruins of the Residency on our left, and the rocks and walls of the Upper Bâlâ Hissar on our right. These walls, now in a ruinous state, are carried up the hills east and west of the fortress, and were built as a safeguard against the sudden raids of the predatory tribes, principally Turkomâns, dwelling on the north-west frontier of Affghânistân.

Entering the Residency through a small doorway, famous as the spot where poor young Hamilton of the Guides and Jenkyns of the Civil Service so nobly sacrificed their lives in charging the gun brought by the sepoys to batter down the door, we entered an outer courtyard, which had been occupied by the guard of Guide Corps Infantry on duty, and passing through another doorway, came to the main buildings of the Residency. On our left were the ruins of the dwelling-house, of which nothing remains standing but a high wall, with fire-places and sockets for beams marking each of the four stories. At right angles to this, facing the upper Bâlâ Hissar, and almost directly over our heads as we entered,

were the remains of the flat roof and parapet from which Cavagnari and Kelly fired on their swarming assailants, and where the former is said to have been wounded in the head. At the foot of the high wall lay a mass of charred timbers, bricks, mud, and other fallen materials, still smoking in one or two places, though six weeks had elapsed since the fire was lighted on the 3rd of September.

A few half-charred remains were found and buried, one skull being recognised as that of a Sikh by the long hair still adhering to it, and two graves just ontside were pointed out unasked by a bystander as those of two "Sahibs," but exhumation showed that they contained the bodies of natives buried long previously. It was afterwards discovered that our officious informant was an *employé* of the Kotwâl or City Magistrate, who had been most active in the attack on the Residency, and that the remains of all, or almost all of our slaughtered countrymen and their followers had been thrown into a large pit just below these two graves. An attempt was made to exhume and recognise them, but it had to be abandoned.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY.—GREAT BAZAAR.—THE ROYAL MINT.—STRANGE COLLECTION OF NATIONALITIES.

SATURDAY, the 18th of October, was a busy day in camp, and I did not go out, but on Sunday I paid my first visit to the city by daylight, taking with me, according to orders, a couple of armed orderlies and carrying a revolver myself. This was a precaution against the attacks of Ghâzis, or religious fanatics. Strange to say not a single instance occurred at Caubul of an attack on Europeans, while at Candahâr they were not at all uncommon. Entering by the Peshawur gate, which is by no means an imposing structure, being an archway closed by double doors with an open

guard-room on each side, and three small apartments above, we gained a squalid but fairly clean street, principally occupied by the poorer mechanics, such as shoemakers, farriers, hucksters, and what would be called at home "marine store dealers," in whose shops could be found all sorts of strange rubbish, including the accoutrements and buttons of almost every regiment, European and Native, which had served on the North-Western Frontier within the last forty years. There were also several Russian badges to be seen. We also noticed the horse-shoes in the farriers' shops, and how well adapted they are to the exceptionally rocky ground over which the wearers have to travel. They are nearly circular plates of soft iron, with a small hole in the centre about an inch in diameter. The heavy nails, four in number, are placed rather too near the toe, according to our ideas, but ample room is thereby left for the play of the heel, and certainly, if the "proof of the pudding is in the eating," this system of shoeing is well suited to the country—corns, tender feet, and the thousand and one evils to which a horse's

feet are subject under more civilised treatment being almost unknown—though on the other hand thrush is very prevalent, owing probably to the impossibility of thoroughly drying the frog, which is all but covered by the circular shoe. I was continually urged by my Kizil Bâsh friends to adopt this style of shoeing, but I preferred our own method, and never had reason to regret it.

After proceeding for about five hundred yards through this street, we entered the Great Bazaar, of course at the opposite end to that by which we had gained admittance on the night of the 9th. Here the sight was certainly one of the most picturesque and animated that I have ever seen. Imagine a roughly-paved street, about eighteen feet wide ; on each side is a sort of wooden dresser or daïs three feet high and two wide, carried uninterruptedly along the front of the shops, the floors of which are on a level with the daïs. These shops are wooden booths, open in front during the day, and closed at night by roughly-finished but strong and sufficiently well-fitting wooden shutters. Above the shops rises a single story



with a small verandah in front, forming the sleeping rooms and women's apartments of the shop keepers. Then comes an open space of from three to four feet for ventilation, and over all a flat roof of poplar beams and pine planks, protecting passengers, customers, and merchants from sun, rain, and above all else, snow, which would otherwise block up the street, and render the space under the daïs useless. This space, which may be called the "area," is now utilised in many ways—either as a workshop for the stall above, a cook-room for the shop keeper, a store-room, or even as a second shop altogether, hired out at a small rental to some of the numerous vendors of "Brummagem" goods, sham embroidery, glass beads, thumb-glasses, embroidery-silks, and other miscellaneous rubbish.

The wall-spaces between the shop-fronts are filled with wooden frames, pegs, and projecting rods, on which are displayed gaily embroidered Persian caps, called "Koollahs," bright-coloured handkerchiefs of silk or cotton, strips of cloth, Cashmere woollen stuffs, Manchester goods, Bokhâra silks, and endless varieties and oddities of

apparel affected by a mixed people just beginning to import from the outer world of civilisation and tinsel. Many of the articles exposed for sale were of native manufacture, and of the prices demanded for these we could not judge, but we found the charges for poshteens, sashes, scarves, and many other things we had been accustomed to purchase in the Punjâb, quite thirty per cent. higher than we had ever been asked before.

Certainly if rapacity and greed, combined with Jewish observances and features can be admitted as evidence, the much be-sneered idea that the Affghâns are descended from the "lost tribes" seems infinitely more worthy of consideration than most of our ethnologists are prepared to admit. Many of their names, too, are unmistakeably Jewish, such, for instance, as "Ibraheem" for Abraham; "Izhâq" for Isaac; "Yâkoob," Jacob; "Yoosuf," Joseph; "Ayoob," Job; "Ismael," Ishmael or Samuel; "Moosa," Moses; "Zahariâh," Zachariah; and many others.

The ends of the covered bazaar were occupied by silversmiths and money-changers, who sacri-

ficed the warmth and protection from the weather afforded by the more central positions, for the sake of the better light obtainable in these more exposed places. The silversmiths' work is very rough, and they appear to have but little originality or inventive faculty, or if they indeed are so gifted, they wrap up the talent in the very thickest of napkins. At the money-changers (all of whom are Khuttri Hindoos, it being a trade strictly forbidden by the Korân) we found a large variety of foreign gold coins, Persian "tillas," Russian five rouble pieces, Hindustâni "mohurs," and others. The Affghâns had no gold coinage of their own until Sher Ali returned from India in 1869, when he caused a few handsome "Ashruffis" to be struck, which are valued at eighteen rupees for the metal alone, the gold being very pure and rich-coloured. I may here mention that on examining the contents of the Ameer's treasury no fewer than thirteen thousand Russian gold coins were found. What were they paid for?

After passing through this first covered bazaar we emerged into sunlight in an octagonal space,

or *Place*, one side formed by the "Kotwâllee," or city magistrate's office and court, and the others by shops and the entrances to the upper and lower sections of the Great Bazaar, the latter being that which I have just attempted to describe. The centre of this *Place* is occupied by a small tank, round which are booths covered with awnings, for the sale of poultry, butchers' meat, sweetmeats and fruit, while every available nook and cranny between the booths is taken possession of by a petty pedlar, dealing in brilliantly coloured gloves and socks, silks, bobbins, and "Brummagem." There must have been a cartload of leaden or tin thimbles, glass beads and thumb-glasses on these men's trays.

The shops round the *Place*, or "eight-sided square" as an Irish friend called it, are occupied by felt and fur sellers, and poshteen makers, for whom this is the favourite rendezvous. The felts are in the form of horse-clothing, saddle-pads, and small carpets or bed-quilts, all dyed with very bright colours in very irregular patterns. When first we arrived at Caubul the little carpets, which

are five feet long by three or three and a half wide, could be bought in any quantities for one Caubullee rupee each—that is, about thirteen pence, but as the weather grew colder and the demand increased, prices rapidly rose to three and even four times this sum. We found the charge for poshteens far higher than in Peshawur, though much expense and delay has to be incurred in their transit to the latter place, not to mention the probability of annexation by the intervening tribes. We soon learnt the true cause of the high prices demanded, which was that the Caubul sirdârs and "gentry" never gave *more* than one-third of the price asked, so that the influx of so much hard cash in the hands of such a set of fools as they thought us, was a real Danaë's shower to these people.

The furriers' shops contained a coarse description of Astrachan, evidently from lambs that had seen the light, the finest and most valuable sort being the skin of the unborn animal. There were also quantities of sable, snow-panther, fox, grey squirrel, and—more than all the rest twice told—

catskins. The city and most of the villages in Northern Affghânistân literally swarm with cats, which are protected and fed for the sake of their skins. When the Persians called this the "country of dogs and stones" (*mooluk-i-sug o sung*), they might have added, "and cats."

At the opposite side of the *Place* to that by which we had entered, is the opening leading into the second section of the Great Bazaar, which is arranged on precisely the same plan as that already described, but the shops do not look so well stocked as those in the lower part, nor is this division so long, measuring not more than two hundred yards from the Kotwallee to the western exit, which opens on to a stone bridge of three arches spanning the Caubul River. Each side of the bridge is occupied by working craftsmen, shoemakers principally, busily plying their trade in spite of scanty space and cramped position.

The stream does not look very tempting just here, although it is many degrees purer than the Jhelum, flowing through that most picturesque but surpassingly filthy city, Sreenugger in Cash-

mere. Beyond the bridge the bazaar still continues, but it is no longer continuously covered in; the thoroughfare is narrower, the houses generally occupied by sweetmeat sellers; cookshops, where you are saluted by a rough skewer loaded with kabobs or fried fish being thrust under your nose; bakers, with their fresh smelling and excellent tasting cakes, or rather flaps, of unleavened bread; grain merchants, and vendors of preserves and scents, tobacco and snuff, of which last the most appreciated is a very powerful green-tea coloured stimulant imported in bottles (soda water for choice!) from Peshawur. Large quantities of this are sold in Caubul, for the Affghân is a thorough Highlander in his fondness for "sneeshin." Where the shops end, the houses are higher and more self-contained, and between these the street continues towards the Asmâi heights, crosses a narrow canal, and eventually joins the Dêh Muzung road; a bye-street turning off at right angles, and leading direct to Sherpore and Bimâroo.

I returned through the bazaar, finding fresh

objects of interest or curiosity at every step, and noticing the principal mosque, which had previously escaped observation through its insignificance. It is a mean looking wooden building in a courtyard separated from the main street by a wooden lattice-work screen, and apparently but little frequented by worshippers. Perhaps the officiating priest, or "moollah," is not a popular preacher.

I was much struck by the almost entire absence of mosques, tombs, and other monuments of Mahomedan conquest and occupation, all the more noticeable to one just arrived from India, where such buildings meet the eye all over the country, and which is all the less intelligible as one becomes better acquainted with the rabid fanaticism of priests and people. But though the outward and visible signs were few, we were to learn ere long what a powerful engine for mischief this same Mahomedanism is capable of becoming.

Close to the mosque, and on the same side of the street, is the mint, and I entered unopposed to see if anything was going on. At

the first glance I should have said it was a holiday, but a more careful circumspection revealed some half a dozen men and boys at work, and as their mode of proceeding was as primitive as it was unusual, I venture to give a short account of "The Royal Caubul Mint."

There were no sentries to oppose my entrance, not even a policeman to look suspiciously at me as I walked through an open doorway into an uncovered court, tenanted only by the few people above-mentioned, who were sitting in a corner round a charcoal fire, which was tended by a small urchin of some ten or eleven summers, who worked a hand-bellows, made of a goat skin, with his left hand, while he fed or stirred the little furnace with his right. Sitting by him was one of the only two adults of the party, an old man with a venerable but very grimy grey beard, holding a pair of scales in which he weighed the rough silver, and afterwards the rupees made from it. On the other side of the fire squatted another urchin, whose business was to hold and watch the melting-ladle, and pour the liquid metal into a row of

moulds like a Pandæan pipe. From these moulds the silver came out in small rods, the size of an ordinary drawing pencil, and of a dull red colour from oxidisation. Another boy clipped these rods into lengths of three-quarters of an inch, and threw them to a huge burly fellow armed with a hammer. This individual having only one eye was immediately christened "Cyclops"—a name he retained until our departure from Caubul. Picking up each piece of red silver pencil with a pair of pincers, he placed it upright on the centre of a die sunk in an iron anvil, and struck it one blow with his ponderous hammer, on the face of which was engraved the obverse of the coin, the reverse being on the anvil. Then he immediately seized the freshly impressed rupee with his pincers and dropped it hissing hot into a pan of mashed quinces, superintended by another little boy, who, ladling out the coins, now bright and clean, threw them into a pan of water, from which again another lad fished them out, dried them, and, the ring of workpeople being now completed, handed them to the old weighman for their final test,

after which they were added to a heap lying on an old blanket behind him.

It was certainly the queerest mint I had ever heard or read of! No guard, completely open to the street, and only superintended by the old man. It seemed a shameful temptation to place before the unscrupulous, hungry-eyed crowd continually passing and repassing the open door, but the old man said no attempt at robbery had ever been made during the years he and "Cyclops" had worked together, though they sometimes had as much as three or four hundred pounds' worth of silver on the ground. I asked what punishment would be given to anyone who might be rash enough to make such an attempt. The old fellow smiled grimly, and said he would have his hands cut off, and be thrown into prison, there to wait until the "Ameer Sâhib" had made up his mind what death he should die!

Leaving the "Royal Mint," we again pushed our way through the crowd, composed of the most motley materials and colours, and consisting of British and Native soldiers in parties of four or

five, according to orders, all armed and in uniform; of Caubul swells in sheepskin caps, long gaberdines, and loose trousers, or sometimes long russia-leather boots; of pedlars, porters, fakeers, beggars, and passengers of all sorts and sizes. Here and there the masculine monotony would be broken by the appearance of a few women, mounted *en cavalier*, or on foot, but in either case completely covered with white "boorkhas," articles of attire something like very large petticoats, gathered into plaits at the top round a tightly fitting skull-cap, with a small lattice-work of open embroidery over the eyes, and covering the whole person, even the feet being invisible. This forms a most impenetrable disguise, and it is quite impossible to guess whether the contents of these moving bundles of linen are fair or dark, old or young, houris or gorillas. None but the very poorest, oldest, or most disreputable of the Affghân women ever appear outside their own apartments unveiled, and the last-mentioned are almost as much disguised with paint and jewellery as their western sisters.

As it was now close upon 4 o'clock, and visits to the bazaars and city were restricted to the hours between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M., we remounted our horses, and soon left the bustle and din of the busy markets behind.

CHAPTER X.

PREPARATIONS FOR WINTER. — EXECUTIONS. — THE AMEER'S PALACE. — PECULIAR TASTE. — CATCHING A GENERAL. — KIZIL BÂSH OPINION OF YÂKOOB KHÂN.

THE following day was spent in camp, superintending the repairs of saddles and gear, and purchasing warm clothing for such servants and camp-followers as were not already fully provided, and most of whom, *more Indico*, would far sooner have run the risk of frost-bite, pneumonia, and possible death, than expend a few shillings on necessary precautions, though they are quite alive to their wants when "the *Sâhib*" supplies them. For the winter each of my servants had a poshteen, a camel's hair robe or *choga*, a suit made of *burruck*, or warm camel's hair cloth, woollen leg-

innumerable watercourses, many of them fringed with poplars growing so closely together that a man *might*, but a horse certainly could *not* pass between them, while many parts of the open ground were at this time so swampy as to be quite impracticable for either horse or man.

On nearing Killa Kâzi, on the Ghuznee road, the enemy was discovered to be advancing in force, and it now became apparent that not only were the Kohistânis coming on from the west and north-west, but also that a totally distinct force was approaching from the Ghuznee direction, *i.e.* the south. This latter column had in its front an open road to the city and cantonments, only blocked by the handful of men (about four hundred and twenty) at General Massy's disposal. So much has been written regarding the circumstances which immediately followed, and by such high authorities, that I shall not venture to express my own opinion, but only record what more immediately concerns my regiment.

The so-called "squadron" under Neville, consisting of only forty-four all told, emulated the

coolness of their European comrades of the 9th Lancers, and poor young Forbes, who had been shot through the leg, and had had his horse shot, seems to have been as cheery and plucky as possible while being helped to the guns by Neville and Captain Chisholme of the 9th Lancers. Here he was made over to the charge of Lieutenant Hardy, one of the subalterns of the battery, and seated on a limber. Shortly afterwards the guns took a wrong turning, and some delay occurred, during which the enemy swarmed down in overwhelming numbers. The drivers cut the traces, and one of the men called on Hardy to gallop away with them, but the gallant young fellow said, "No! I won't desert my guns, besides, I can't leave that youngster," alluding to Forbes. So they both met their deaths.

The guns were now in the hands of the enemy, who overturned them into some pits at the side of the road, and then followed the slowly retreating Cavalry, by whom they were successfully checked in their attempt to advance straight on the city, so they turned rather to their right, streaming

through orchards and plantations, and, giving a wide berth to Dêh Muzung, now occupied by us in tolerable force, made for the heights of the Tukht-i-Shâh hill, whence they could command the Bâlâ Hissar, which was occupied by a picquet of British Infantry, who held it against repeated attacks during the succeeding night.

I was now at Dêh Muzung with a squadron of my own regiment, having been sent out from cantonments immediately on receipt of the news of the capture of our guns, which was brought into Sherpore accompanied by a report that the whole Cavalry Brigade had been cut to pieces ! The latter piece of intelligence was so utterly incredible that it was some time before even the true part of the story was believed. I had come by the nearest route, through the suburbs, where I met a syce, or native groom, of General Roberts', who complained that he had been beaten and his horse stolen. I had no time to inquire further, though it was the General's handsome little grey Arab, but pushed on through a mob which was evidently on the verge of an outbreak. Scowling faces,

muttered threats, and half-drawn weapons met me at every corner, and I should hardly have cared to make the journey alone. Almost as soon as I reached Dêh Muzung, General Massy told me to take some spare Artillery teams, and send in the four guns if I could, and then go on to try and recover the bodies of our dead.

On reaching the guns I found that General Macpherson's Brigade had already arrived there, and that the wiry little Goorkhas were hard at work getting them on to the road again, so I left the teams, and went on to try and carry out the second part of my instructions. After some time spent in searching the fields, I came upon the bodies of two of our own men, but on attempting to place them across empty saddles, I found that it was impossible, owing to the way in which they had been hacked about; I was therefore most unwillingly obliged to leave them. A little further on was the corpse of the only son of an old Native officer who was with me at the time, but this too had to be abandoned for the same reason. I told the father, a fine-looking, broad-

shouldered old greybeard, how sorry I was not to bring in his son's body for the performance of the ordinary funeral rites, but the old fellow said, "What better funeral can he have than to die in battle?" and then, catching hold of my hand, burst into tears. Poor old boy! He soon followed his son.

It was now quite dark, except for the fitful light of the stars, so I got back on to the Ghuznee road as quickly as possible, and was riding at the head of the squadron as usual, when a man suddenly put his head and shoulders over a garden wall on my left and fired at me. He was so close that I could have caught hold of his rifle-barrel. After firing the shot he disappeared again, and as by this time I had learnt something of Affghân tactics, I made the squadron move on while I remained on the far side of where he had shown himself. As soon as he had reloaded he put his head over the wall again, looking after the squadron which had now passed, and again raised his rifle for a shot at the rear files, so I put my revolver to his head and stopped further mischief.

Had he fired at the rear of the column, penned up as it was in the narrow lane, he *must* have hit some one.

I regained the head of the squadron with some difficulty, owing to the holes in the road, and had hardly done so when we were challenged in an unmistakeably English voice, and I found myself with the 67th Regiment, which formed General Macpherson's rear-guard. That Brigadier was himself at Dêh Muzung, preparing to bivouac for the night, so I reported myself, and was directed to return to Sherpore, which was now denuded of Cavalry.

At this time the stars were shining most brilliantly, and one of the constellations (Orion's belt, I believe,) stood just above the highest peak of Tukht-i-Shâh, like a brilliant fiery cross. I had heard the men behind me talking earnestly, and turning in my saddle, I saw one of them pointing to this collection of stars, saying something at the same time, of which I could only catch the words "sâhib" and "nishân" ("ensign" or "badge"). On asking what they were talking about, a Native

officer rode up, and said that they had all come to the conclusion that the appearance of this "nishân" was supernatural, and foreshadowed the victory of our arms in all future struggles with the Affghâns.

When the enemy were streaming over the plain away from Sherpore on the morning of the 23rd of December, the men again referred to this cross in the heavens.

After a most tiresome ride and numerous false alarms, I got back to cantonments at 10 P.M., and in something less than an hour found myself on picquet at the north-west angle, where an *abattis* and wire entanglement had been constructed to block up the gap between the uncompleted end of the barracks and the foot of the Bimâroo Ridge.

Friday, the 12th of December.—On returning to quarters this morning after a night spent in the snow, the first thing I heard was that during the whole of the preceding day General Roberts had been unable to communicate, even by heliograph, with General Baker's Brigade. The Guide Corps

had arrived during the night in the very nick of time, for had they been even a few hours later they would have been beaten back or annihilated.

During the day there was almost continual Infantry skirmishing on the Tukht-i-Shâh, but the enemy still held the position, which was a very strong one.

An officer of the 72nd Highlanders who had been wounded was being brought into cantonments in a dooly, or litter, through the outskirts of the city, escorted by a party of his own regiment. They were fired on from some housetops, and the poor fellow was again hit through the eyes, losing one entirely. He had to be taken back again to his regiment.

The 13th of December.—Firing had been both heard and seen on the Tukht-i-Shâh by the sentries throughout the night, and also on one or two other peaks of the same range, so early this morning we were on the walls, but could see little or nothing. At last the sound of the firing, which had been gradually growing slacker, completely

died away, and soon afterwards a heliograph was seen flashing from the very crest of the hill, so we knew it was in our possession. Almost immediately afterwards, it being now nearly noon, we received orders for two squadrons to join General Massy at once, so I started, and found him just outside his gate, with a squadron of the 9th Lancers as well. We went out to, and up, the Siah Sung heights, where the Infantry had been encamped before moving into Sherpore. Nothing was to be seen from this, but on hearing that another squadron of the 9th and the Guides Cavalry had come across the enemy on our left, we turned our steps in that direction, and on descending from Siah Sung found a sowar of the Guides lying badly wounded. While he was being attended to, Captain Chisholme of the 9th came back, reeling in his saddle from weakness and loss of blood, having received a severe bullet wound in the thigh. He refused to dismount and get into a dooly, and in spite of the pain and dizziness managed to ride into camp.

Just after he had passed firing was heard from behind the shoulder of a hill close at hand, and one of our sowars came to report that some men had taken refuge in some old deserted turquoise mines, and were firing on all who approached, so we sent to dislodge them, which our people soon did, at the expense of one of their number rather badly wounded. Our force then retired, with the exception of my squadron, which remained on the ground as a rear-guard. We soon formed a melancholy procession, for I only waited till the last of our dead had passed towards Sherpore and then followed.

This "last" proved to be a man well known and much liked in the Cavalry Brigade, Troop Sergeant-Major Spittle of the 9th Lancers. He was a very fat, but still wonderfully active man, and was very fond of saying, "Ah! If me and my black 'orse honly comes across one of they Haffgans, you 'll see, sir!" He had been riding a strange trooper that morning, which would not face the flashing knives, and the poor fellow was cut down at once, but not before

he had left his mark on more than one of his assailants.

We returned to Sherpore at half-past 5 in the evening.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIGHT ON ASMÂI. — THE MOUNTAIN GUNS. — RETREAT INTO SHERPORE.—RATIONS.

SUNDAY, the 14th of December.—Shortly after daylight this morning large bodies of men with standards were seen on the crest of Asmâi, west of the city, and at 9 A.M. we went out over the plain, taking a route parallel to these heights and leading towards the Owshâr Kotul. On reaching the open plain lying between this Kotul and the end of the lake we halted, and soon saw some mounted men coming towards us from the Kotul. In a few minutes one of these emerged from a garden, and appeared to be examining us through a glass. He then fired a shot which came close to us. Two of our officers whose orderlies carried

Henry-Martini rifles now dismonnted, and going out to the front had a regular duel with this gentleman—result, *nil.*

While this was going on a Staff-officer came up with a message, in consequence of which I went back with a squadron and joined some of the Guide Corps Cavalry, who were halted in a patch of ploughed land facing the ridge. All this time some of our Infantry and mountain guns had been advancing along the crest of Asmâi to meet the Kohistânis, who were swarming along from the west towards the city. I had formed up alongside the Guides, and was talking to one of their officers, when a shell dropped into the ploughed ground not ten yards in front of us. On digging it out it proved to be a seven-pound Armstrong shell, but where it came from I have no notion, and can only imagine that one of our own mountain guns must have fired at us by mistake.

The Guides were now recalled by Sir F. Roberts' orders, and I joined General Baker, who with G. 3, R.A. and some Infantry, was at the ruined village of Bulund Kheyl, facing a dip in the Asmâi range

called the Aliabâd Kotul. From this position we had a capital view of the crest and northern side of Asmâi. Between us and the Kohistân road, which runs along the foot of the hills, lay a swamp, beyond which a footpath branched off to the south of the road, crossing the Kotul into the Chardêh plain. On the right of this path, just as it reached the crest of the hill, was a mass of rock and shale, standing up sharply against the sky; this was named by us the "Conical Hill." On each side of the Kotul the range rose several hundred feet higher. This pass had been seized by General Baker, thus cutting the enemy on the heights in two, and at the time of my arrival—a little after noon—it was occupied by four mountain guns under Lieutenant Montanaro, and some small detachments of Infantry.

The force under General Baker* was not more than one thousand six hundred of all arms. The

* Four guns G. 3, R.A., four guns No. 2 Mountain Battery; 14th Bengal Lancers, three hundred; 72nd Highlanders, two hundred; 92nd Highlanders, one hundred; Guides Infantry, four hundred and fifty; 5th Punjab Infantry, four hundred and seventy.

guns at Bulund Kheyl were firing at a body of the enemy retiring along the crest east of the Kotul towards it, driven back in their attempt to reach the city by our people who had ascended from Dêh Muzung. Soon after I reached Bulund Kheyl the rest of the regiment came up, and we were presently ordered to make our way over the Kotul, and see what was going on in Chardêh, as our mountain guns were now firing in that direction. If we could get an opportunity we were to inflict what loss was possible on the enemy in the valley. After riding round the head of the swamp before mentioned we climbed in single file up the steep rocky path, and greeting Montanaro, halted at the top of the Kotul to look about us. At our feet lay the valley, a good deal of its surface covered with water, and the entire expanse cut up by innumerable watercourses, and dotted with villages, the chief of which is Killa Kâzi, on the Ghuznee road.

Montanaro's guns were shelling a square fort about one thousand six hundred yards distant, and from his elevated position he was able to drop

shell after shell right into the enclosure. Evidently it soon became too hot to be pleasant inside, for a party of twenty or five and twenty horsemen dashed out and gallopped away to the westward. At these the little mountain guns made some very pretty but ineffectual practice.

We now moved down into the Chardêh valley, but had scarcely reached the level ground when we saw swarms of the enemy advancing in two directions, one mass through the village of Indiki, in the southerly or Logur Valley direction, and the other from the Kohistân road, west. At the same time we found that the estimate formed from the heights above of the condition and formation of the ground was quite correct, and that it was totally unfitted for Cavalry movements. We therefore turned, and reascended the path leading over the Kotul. While doing this some of the enemy appeared on a spur running parallel to our path, and began firing at us, hitting a Sowar in the arm. Repassing the mountain guns we went down into a hollow on the northern side of the Kotul, and halted there, thinking we were well under cover,

but in a very few minutes we began to feel the enemy's fire, though we could see nothing of them. Large bodies of Kohistânis were making their way along the crest of the range, firing at the guns on the Kotul as they advanced, and many of their bullets pitched amongst us. One of the men was hit through the bridle hand, another's horse wounded in the quarter, and while I was speaking to the old Native officer whose son had been killed on the 11th I heard a bullet strike him, and he fell forward on his holsters, hit in the shoulder. I at once sent him to the rear for surgical treatment, but he died in hospital ten days afterwards.

Finding my present position both unpleasant and useless, I moved back again to the field-guns at Bulund Kheyl, and became one of the spectators of a most exciting scene.

The enemy from the west were streaming on in the direction of our mountain guns on the Kotul, their advance marked by waving standards, glittering arms, and many a puff of smoke from their rifles and matchlocks. Every now and then a leader would spring on to a rock and gesticulate

to his men, evidently cheering them on, while in advance of all rode a man on a chesnut horse, attended by several *moollahs* in their white robes, giving the signal for the Mahomedan war-cry which was taken up by thousands of voices, till the mountains rang again with the fanatical, "Yâ Allâh ! Yâ Allâh ! Yâ Allâh ! " of the Moslem host. Along the ridge on our left (the east) came the 72nd Highlanders and some Sikh Infantry, who had cleared their immediate opponents off the heights, and were now racing to reach our guns before the enemy.

On they came from both sides, but the mountaineers had easier ground and perhaps better wind than our men, and came first on the guns, which had waited a moment too long ; while they were being strapped on the mules a human wave crested with foam of steel swept over them, and the gunners had to run for their lives. Some of the 72nd headed by Captain Spens and a Colour-Serjeant tried to check the enemy, but they were far too few, and their gallant leader fell immediately, his head severed from his body by a stroke

of an Affghân knife wielded in death-agony by a man through whose body Spens had already driven his claymore, and for some time the enemy were in possession of the Kotul and two of our guns. The Infantry at hand (Guides and 5th Punjâb Regiment) was sent to dislodge them, but the position was too strong, and the numbers by which it was held were by this time so overwhelming, that they were again recalled, and it was not until reinforcements arrived from Sherpore that the guns were recovered.

We, 14th Bengal Lancers, were now sent a few yards to the rear of Bulund Kheyl to a field, where we could dismount under cover and water our horses at a stream. The field-guns followed almost immediately, and shortly afterwards we all moved off towards Sherpore by General Baker's orders. A short way outside the Headquarters (western) gateway we found the rest of the battery, and here we again halted while the Infantry reinforcements above-mentioned passed us on their way to the heights. At this time, about 4 P.M., General Macpherson signalled from the

Bâlâ Hissar that increasing masses of the enemy were advancing from the south, west, and north-west, so the troops were ordered to retire into cantonments, and on that Sunday night the enemy occupied the city and Bâlâ Hissar, and the British force was shut up in Sherpore.

This day (14th) our regiment lost one man killed, a Native officer, four men, and three horses wounded, without getting a single chance at the enemy. While we were at dinner an order came for a squadron to proceed at once on picquet duty, and as it was my turn I was just starting when a counter-order came, and I was permitted to finish my anything but toothsome meal in peace. From this time to the 24th we got no supplies whatever from outside the walls, but had to exist entirely on rations, and exceedingly nasty some of these rations were. The tinned Chicago beef was by far the best thing we got.

CHAPTER XVI.

PATROLLING AND PICQUET DUTY.—DIFFICULTIES INCREASED BY FROST.—REPORTED ESCALADE.—A BITTER NIGHT.—"OH! FOR A CHANGE!"

MONDAY, the 15th of December. This morning I took out a reconnoitring party through Bimâroo village to the pass north-east of cantonments, as it was thought that the Kohistânis might attempt a flanking movement by this route, which is also one of the roads to their own district. Two signallers of the 9th Lancers accompanied me, but although they repeatedly attemped to open communication with headquarters, they could not succeed, and I discovered on my return that the wiseacres in charge had forgotten to post an intermediate station on the Bimâroo Ridge. On

approaching the pass, which is three miles from Bimâroo, I found the hills on both flanks occupied, and was soon under fire, out of which I came as fast as possible, as I had the strictest orders not to expose my party. I took up a position just out of range, and waited until dark without seeing anything, so I returned to camp. Directly after dinner we turned out to man the walls in case of a night attack, and passed the time in making loop-holes and filling sand-bags.

On the 16th I went out early with a small party to two low hills a mile and a half west of Sherpore, and north of the village of Bulund Kheyl, from which a capital view could be obtained of the greater part of the valley and its mountain barrier, from the city round by the Asmâi Heights and Owshâr Kotul, thence all along the ranges bounding the plain at its western extremity and northern side to the pass I had tried to get through on the previous day. I had long ago fixed upon this as a "coign of vantage" in the course of a morning ride, but I little thought then how useful

my knowledge was to prove, or how often I was to occupy my perch on the topmost point. Just at the foot of these hills was a small Kizil Bâsh village, from which some of the inhabitants always brought me some most acceptable tea each time I was on picquet there. My orders were to watch the Kohistân road most carefully, and report all movements along it. As armed parties were continually passing to and fro, between the city and the Owshâr Kotul, I had plenty of occupation.

As soon as I showed myself on these hills the enemy began firing from the Asmâi range—a foolish proceeding on their part, and one which entirely failed in its presumed purpose of annoying me, but which showed that they had no fear of running short of ammunition, as how should they, with the whole of the contents of the remaining magazine in the Bâlâ Hissar at their disposal? Why this ammunition was allowed to remain where it was found, instead of having been removed into Sherpore or destroyed, was one of several similar questions which puzzled some of us at this

time, and to which no satisfactory answer has yet been found.

Large bodies of men now left the collection of villages at the foot of the Owshâr Kotul, where they had been passing the night, and ranged themselves in tolerably regular formation on the road leading over the pass, which they occupied in force. The whole range from this Kotul to the shoulder of Asmâi above the city—some three miles—was now literally alive with the enemy, and bristling with waving standards and flashing steel. It was a very pretty sight, and I sat watching it until noon, when the sky clouded over and it began to snow heavily, so I shut up my glasses, and wrapped my poshteen more closely round me.

The poor horses had only one blanket each, and that but a thin one ; besides, they could not smoke, a solace which all hands except the vedettes were soon enjoying. At length eight o'clock came, and I ended my fruitless watch and returned to Sherpore.

I found that during my absence all the gateways

had been barricaded with sand-bags, boxes filled with earth, &c., openings being left in the headquarters' and 72nd gateways for the passage of troops, which were blocked up with gun-waggons when not in use. After an hour for "rest and refreshment," I went off with my squadron for dismounted picquet duty at the north-west corner, where we slept on the ground in the snow, not even a truss of fodder having been provided for the tired, half-frozen men, though there was plenty, and it would have been just as eatable after having served as bedding. No wonder so many men suffered and died from pneumonia.

I visited my sentries every hour; but we had a quiet night, and at daylight I marched back to barracks and went straight to bed, only to be roused in an hour by the intelligence that I had just time to get some breakfast — which our thoughtful Adjutant had already ordered for me— and had then to go out to my two hills again, "as, from having been there yesterday," I was "best able to form an opinion of the numbers of the enemy passing along the Kohistân road."

Off I started—but now a fresh difficulty presented itself—the snow had ceased, partly thawed, and then a sharp frost had set in, making the riding as slippery and dangerous as possible. I managed to get out all right, and the day was a counterpart of the previous one, but colder. Returning at night, a good many shots were fired at us, but without effect, though we must have presented sufficiently prominent marks against the background of freshly fallen snow, and we could not move faster than a walk at any time, while for minutes together we halted at the passage of the frozen watercourses, where I had at first some difficulty in preventing the men from crowding together, and thus presenting a larger target for the enemy's rifles. Fortunately we got back untouched, and after the usual report to the Chief of the Staff, and a hurried dinner, I found myself on wall-picquet for the night. This was a decided improvement on the experiences of the previous night, as I had the Mess kitchen at hand, and could drink hot cocoa all night if I chose—and I did choose.

I do not think I mentioned that our small allowance of rum (half a dram per diem) had entirely ceased on the 13th. From that date until the 3rd of January we were without strong waters, except a small supply of whisky which the hospitable 92nd had hoarded up, and which was disbursed to all comers on Christmas-eve

A good many shots were fired at our sentries during the night, but without effect, and in the morning (18th) we found that parties of sharpshooters had established themselves under cover of the ruined walls, which in some places came within four hundred yards of our defences, from which they opened fire on anyone who showed himself. The worst of this was that every one of their bullets which went over the walls pitched amongst the horses and followers inside the enclosure, so we soon moved them close in under cover, but not before two horses, a pony, and a syce had been hit. At the first fall of snow I had brought my own animals and followers to the verandah and ground immediately in front of my own door, where they were thoroughly protected.

Next morning, the 18th, there was a report that the enemy had prepared an immense number of scaling-ladders, and intended to storm the walls, so we manned their entire length, with supports at intervals in the ditch. Our men took their lances with them, to use as boarding-pikes in case the enemy carried their threatened attempt into execution, when we should doubtless have found the benefit of "*la reine des armes blanches*" on foot, as we had already proved its powers on horseback. However, no opportunity was afforded us, for they never came on, and after 2 P.M. all but the usual sentries (one to every hundred yards of wall by day, double that number at night,) were withdrawn, and I again set off to see how matters looked from my twin hills. Here I remained until after nightfall, but without any signs of the enemy. The whole country was one sheet of snow about a foot deep, and not a mouse could stir without being seen, or even heard in the intense stillness. After dinner I took my squadron to the rear of the gorge in the Bimâroo ridge, where we formed part of the inlying picquet — eight hundred men, all told.

Here we had our tents pitched, so we were quite comfortable.

On Friday, the 19th, I again went out to my post on the hills, and again the enemy were passing and repassing along the foot of Asmâi. I should dearly have liked to vary the monotony a little, and could have laid some pretty traps for the rascals who kept swarming about the Kotul and neighbouring villages, and who were becoming bolder or less cautious as they found that I took no notice of their random shots; but my proposal to annoy them in return was received with looks of horror, and the exclamation, "Oh, but you might lose some men!" In vain I quoted the French proverb regarding the manufacture of omelettes, neither English reasoning nor foreign sarcasm had the slightest effect, and the enemy daily laughed at our beards unreproved.

Poor Montanaro, who had fought his guns so pluckily on the Asmâi ridge on the 14th, was mortally wounded by a rifle-bullet during the day, and died on the 28th.

At night I was on picquet on the walls, where

everything was quiet except the hum of sounds from the city, which grew gradually fainter after the Moslem call to evening prayer.

20th of December.—This morning again saw me at my hill-picquet, from which I returned as usual at 8 P.M., and, equally "as usual," was fired at *en route*. Later I again took my squadron to the rear of the gorge, where we remained in reserve till midnight, when I received orders to move to the top of the ridge. Here we found it most bitterly cold. Of course the tents could not be moved then, as it would have caused a good deal of disturbance, and the noise of hammering the pegs would most likely have drawn a heavy fire on our very exposed position; so we shivered through the rest of the night as best we could, and at dawn some of the men's legs had to be rubbed vigorously for a considerable time before they could walk back to their quarters.

Sunday, the 21st.—I took my squadron out to the hill-picquet first, and finding all as usual there, took a circuit round the head of the lake, looked over the path in the centre of the northern range

of hills, whence no signs of the enemy were visible; met and exchanged news with a squadron of the 9th Lancers; and then returned to my eyrie, whence I reported "all clear" to head-quarters, fondly hoping that I might be recalled. Not a bit of it! I had to sit on my perch in the snow, a vedette on each side of me, (while the shivering men and horses packed themselves together in the hollow below,) until 8 P.M. when I went back to Sherpore to take the wall-picquet for the night. This was becoming monotonous, and I began to long for a quiet day in quarters, and still more, for a quiet night in bed, with the luxury of undressing for it! For being awaked to visit sentries every hour, never taking even one's boots off during the night, and sitting on a bleak hill-top all day, waiting, Micawber-like, for "something to turn up" which never comes, is apt to become singularly wearisome if long persevered in.

CHAPTER XVII.

ATTACK ON SHERPORE.—THE BEACON-FIRE.—HOT WORK FOR A COLD MORNING.—A PLUCKY ENEMY.—MORE LUCKY THAN ACHILLES.—CONSEQUENCES OF A BAD FUSE.—END OF SIEGE.—REINFORCEMENTS.—"REQUIESCANT."

THE following morning, 22nd of December, I had a change of locality. Numbers of Kohistânis were said to have come through the pass north-east of Bimâroo, to which I had gone on the 15th; so I went to find out about them. I had an escort of only twenty men, and was to bolt as soon as I was fired at. This happened very soon; but, as usual, the enemy began firing while we were some distance off, so I gave them a wide berth. I "felt" all the villages at this end of the valley, and with the same result—a volley

from each. Whether they had really been occupied by the Kohistânis during the night, as was reported, or whether the villagers were having a little game on their own account, I could not say. But one sign made me think it was the latter; this was that the numerous herds of cattle which used to feed daily at the margin of the lake had not been let out to-day. I returned in the evening, and at night went on picquet on the Bimâroo ridge, east of the gorge. My own little tent, and two sepoys' tents for the men, had been pitched for us during the day, so we were quite comfortable. Just behind me was Brigadier-General Hugh Gough's tent; he commanded this section of the defence. The whole circuit of Sherpore had been divided into sections, and placed in charge of the senior officers. On my left was a picquet of the 23rd Punjâb Pioneers, a remarkably fine regiment composed of Muzbi Sikhs; and on my right one of the 5th Goorkhas, their monkey faces and squat little figures forming a ludicrous contrast to their handsome stalwart neighbours. Small and ugly as they are though, there are no

pluckier nor more faithful men in the ranks of the Native Army than the tough little Goorkhas.

Behind and below us, in the cantonment, were the reserves.

I was just dozing off to sleep again after having visited my sentries at midnight, when I heard someone ride up, and recognised Morton, the Assistant Adjutant-General's voice asking for General Gough's tent. He told us that some Kizil Bâshis had just come in with the information that there was to be a 'general attack before dawn,' the signal to be a beacon lighted on the shoulder of the Asmâi Ridge just above the city.

At this time everything was most ominously and unusually quiet in the city, and continued so till five minutes past six, when a great light suddenly shot up from Asmâi, lighted, as we afterwards heard, by old Mooshk-i-Alam, the head Moollah, himself, who had been carried there in a litter for the purpose.

Instantly a dull roar of voices rose from the city. Above all could be distinguished the continuous, "Yâ Allâh! Yâ Allâh! Yâ Allâh!"

of the priests, and the monotonous rattle of countless war-drums beating to arms. After the dead silence this had the most startling, magical, I had almost said theatrical, effect, and knowing what it preluded it was most exciting. Day had not yet broken, but the stars and snow prevented its being really dark, even after the signal-fire sunk low. Quickly but quietly the men fell in, and took their places in a shallow trench running along the outer crest of the ridge, having an *abattis* in front of it to check any sudden rush from below.

Some shots were now heard from the south-west angle of cantonments, but these appeared to be intended as a feint, for they soon stopped, and all was quiet for a few minutes, when suddenly from the exactly opposite, or north-east angle, close to Bimâroo village, arose a din as if every fiend in hell had broken loose! The under-current, or bass, was one ceaseless roll of musketry broken at frequent intervals by the roar of a heavy gun. Above this rose British cheers and Sikh war-cries answering the yells of the Moollahs

and Ghâzis, screams, shrieks, and noises of every hideous description. Add to this that the bullets were whistling about us, knocking up the stones, splintering the *abattis*, and tearing through the empty tents, and you may form a very inadequate idea of the scene on which the peaceful stars looked down.

All this time my men were lying in the trench wrapped in their poshteens and cloaks, each man having scraped himself a lair in the snow. There was not a breath of wind, and it was one of those perfectly still nights when the very air seems deadened by the frost. Suddenly the din ceased, and the silence which succeeded was intense by contrast, when from the valley below rose the long mournful wail of a jackal, answered further off by the rest of the pack. One of the Native officers who was sitting by me in the trench laid his hand on my arm, saying in an awestruck voice, "Sahib! The Devil has sent them to the banquet!" Almost immediately the firing recommenced, if possible more furiously than before. I can only compare it to one long-continued *feu-de-joie*, or rather, *feu-d'enfer*.

Day now began to dawn, and it grew gradually lighter and lighter, till the pale winter sun rose on the snow-clad scene—and still the fire went on.

My servant, Mirân Bux, now appeared, bearing (forgive the βάθος, kind reader!) a teapot full of hot cocoa, which he had brought all the way from the mess in spite of the bullets which were falling pretty fast in the enclosure. I shared this welcome draught with a neighbour, and we had scarcely finished, and sent the teapot back again on its perilous course, when we noticed a movement in one of the villages below us. The glasses showed that this was caused by a body of men with standards and mounted leaders advancing from the village towards us. They kept a little to our right, and did not come within easy range of our Snider carbines, so, the strictest orders having been issued forbidding any waste of ammunition, (though it was not publicly known how very scanty our reserve supply was until long afterwards,) I left the firing to be done by the long rifles of the Infantry.

The enemy came on capitally, taking cover

behind every ridge and mound, and then running on to the next sheltering irregularity, until finally they got behind a blank wall nearly at the foot of the heights, whence they commenced a galling, though nearly harmless fire. Their numbers were continually receiving additions as more men crept up from the village, and at one time they seemed to have made up their minds for a rush, for some men, evidently leaders, came out waving standards and shouting, but a few well-aimed shots sent all (but one or two who fell) back to cover.

Between 10 and 11 A.M. there was another lull, but at the latter hour the fire again grew hot, and crowds of the enemy were now seen slowly retiring across the plain north of Bimâroo village. The 5th Punjâb Cavalry and G 3, R.A. moved out through the gorge, apparently with the object of operating on the enemy's flank, but if this really was their intention it certainly was not carried out effectually, for the guns opened a heavy fire on a deserted village, while a troop of the Cavalry dismounted and fired in the direction

of the enemy, who were however well out of range of their carbines.

One of the Affghân leaders mounted on a chesnut horse now rode up in the coolest way, right under the fire of our Infantry, to the men collected behind the wall, gave some orders (I could plainly see him through my glasses pointing and gesticulating), and then rode off again as nonchalantly—but not as safely—as he came, for before he had gone many yards he threw up his arms and fell from his horse. Some of his followers picked him up, and placing across the saddle what was now evidently only a lifeless body, carried it off. It was impossible to help feeling sorry for the plucky fellow.

By one o'clock the firing had nearly ceased, and swarms of the enemy could be seen drawing off towards the gap leading to Kohistân which I have so frequently mentioned. Now was the time for our Cavalry to be brought into play, but by far the greater portion of that arm was, like my own squadron, scattered about the defences on dismounted duty, far from their horses. Luckily we

had one squadron in reserve, which went out round the base of Siah Sung, and did good execution there. Had the whole of the Cavalry Brigade been available at this juncture, it would have inflicted a crushing blow on the disorganised and disheartened enemy.

At 1.45 P.M. I received orders to take my squadron back to the lines, saddle, and be ready to turn out at a moment's notice.

I soon got the men out of the trench, heartily tired of the *rôle* they had played as inactive spectators, and we marched down the ridge and across the enclosure towards the barracks, but had no sooner reached the level ground than the enemy's bullets from the city side began to drop round and among us, continuing to do so all the way till we got under cover of the barracks. Fortunately I had no casualties, though one of the non-commissioned officers had a narrow shave, the heel of his boot being knocked off by a bullet.

On reaching the barracks I found that the enemy were still firing sharply from the walls and buildings beforementioned at anyone who showed him-

self, but they did not attempt to approach any nearer, being completely held in check by our men on the walls. A party of sappers under Lieutenant Nugent, R.E., had gone out with Dundas, covered by some Cavalry, to blow up two villages on the south-east of Sherpore, from which the enemy had given us great annoyance. Most unfortunately they used an Affghân fuse, taken from amongst those found in the Bâlâ Hissar; being faultily constructed it exploded the mine too soon, and both the officers were killed.

By evening the firing had almost entirely ceased, only an occasional shot being heard, and the vicinity was clear of the enemy, most of whom made off to their homes as fast as they could, and the "Siege of Sherpore" was at an end.

During the time the enemy had occupied the city they had done a good deal of damage, of which we got the benefit, for all prices were doubled, at least. While they were in possession of the Bâlâ Hissar constant explosions were going on; more than one hundred and thirty tons of powder

had been left there, all of which fell into the hands of the enemy. One rather good story was told by a native who claimed to have been an eye-witness of the occurrence. The followers of two rival petty chiefs were quarrelling for the possession of a cooper containing eighty or one hundred pounds of gunpowder. The stronger party got possession of it, and were carring it off in triumph, when one of the other faction, crying, "If we can't get it you shan't keep it!" threw a lighted coal into it, blowing himself, his friends and foes, upwards of a hundred in number, into small pieces.

There was much discussion as to the numbers opposed to us, and of course with an enemy all round us, to whose standards crowds were daily added, while many of the more faint-hearted slunk off to their homes, it was impossible to do more than form a very rough estimate. On the morning of the 23rd of December I calculated the enemy in sight from my post when they were most numerous at twelve thousand. Sir F. Roberts writes, "I am of opinion that not more than sixty thousand took the field at any one time." He

estimates their losses at "not less than three thousand killed and wounded."

After nightfall one or two shots came in over the walls, probably fired in bravado by some rascals who happened to pass within range, but we were at length able to enjoy a good, unbroken night's rest, which was thoroughly appreciated.

Next morning, the 24th, the Cavalry Brigade moved out in two divisions, one taking the road through the Sung-i-Navishta defile, while the other went over the Owshâr Kotul, both meeting in the Chardêh plain ; but not a sign of the enemy was found, and, a heavy snown-storm coming on, the Brigade returned to Sherpore by nightfall after one of the most disagreeable expeditions of the whole war.

We spent a quiet and most sober Christmas Eve, and then welcomed another of those almost forgotten luxuries—a long, sound, and undisturbed sleep ! During the day a brigade under General C. Gough marched in from the Jellalabâd direction, much disappointed at being too late.

On Christmas Day General Charles Gough's

Brigade was ordered to encamp on the Siah Sung ridge, but this was afterwards countermanded, and the 9th Foot and 4th Goorkhas were quartered in the Bâlâ Hissar, as the space inside Sherpore was both cramped for room and swampy from the daily melting of the snow.

On Monday, the 29th, a party of our own men and some Infantry went out to the scene of the action on the 11th, to try and recover the bodies of those slain on that occasion. Those of Forbes and Hardy were found buried under a bank pointed out by some children from a neighbouring village; the adult inhabitants were either sulky or afraid, and professed entire ignorance of the subject. The bodies had *not* been mutilated as was reported, nor was this done during the campaign; and though some of our dead were certainly found much cut about, I never heard of one authenticated instance of the perpetration of such loathsome barbarities as were related by some correspondents, and of which one reads in accounts of the former Affghân wars.

On the last day of the expiring year we buried

our dead with full military honours in the cemetery at the north-west angle, and there they rest under the shadow of Bimâroo till the Great Réveillée shall sound.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.—DRAWING THE GENERAL.—ORDERED TO JELLALABAD.—A BAD CAMP.—JUGDULLUCK.—THE HILL OF BLOOD.—A TALE OF '41.—ROZABAD.

THE next few days were occupied with committees on losses and other incidental business of the "red-tape" order. On New Year's Eve many of us met at the Mess of the 92nd Highlanders, where a glass of hot whisky and water was made doubly acceptable by the hearty hospitality with which it was offered; and the evening concluded with a procession of volunteer musicians, who, seizing the instruments from the grinning bandsmen, marched along the frozen path in front of the barracks all the way to the Headquarters' gateway, making night hideous with their discordant din. On

reaching the sacred precincts of the Staff quarters, loud calls were heard for "the General," and at length he appeared, somewhat *déshabillé* indeed, but rather enjoying the fun, and saying good-naturedly, "Well, the 92nd have always come to the front when *I* called on *them*, so I suppose I must do the same now!"

In a day or two we received orders to take charge of a convoy of sick and wounded returning to India, but we were not told whether we were to accompany it the whole way or not.

Sir F. Roberts issued a General Order on our departure, complimenting the regiment highly on the good service it had rendered.

On the 5th of January 1880 we marched from Sherpore, accompanied for some miles by our Brigadier; and soon reaching the point at which the Peshawur road dips behind Siah Sung, looked our last on the scene of much fun, more friendship, and most fighting. We shortly afterwards found ourselves threading our way through a fœtid marsh, the malaria arising from which gives to the east wind in summer the ominous name of *Hâwâ-*

i-Mowt, "The breath of Death"; the black, stagnant water lay in deep pools over a bed of deep and still blacker mud, its oily surface broken by moss-hags, and only passable by the narrow track we were pursuing.

Through the centre of this morass flows the Caubul River, crossed by a masonry bridge. At length the road becomes firmer, the water ceases, and you find yourself on the verge of a stony plain, its surface broken by numerous knolls most of which bristle with upright stones, sometimes rudely carved, marking the graves of the "rude forefathers" of the neighbouring hamlets. Ten miles from Caubul we halted under the walls of the little fort of Bhootkâk, which we found occupied by a party of the 9th Foot; here we had to leave an officer and fifty lances to strengthen the garrison and carry Her Majesty's mails.

Next day we marched to Luttabund, thus avoiding the steep and difficult Koord Caubul pass. The distance was nine miles, and the road fair, but stony. On our way we passed the carcases of two elephants which had fallen victims to cold and hard

work. They were covered with snow, and it was only through our horses shying at them that we found out they were anything but the weather-beaten rocks they looked like, the sharp frost preventing the discovery from any other sense than that of sight, fortunately.

We came upon two small masonry forts, occupied by our Native Infantry, just before reaching the encamping ground which appeared to be in the most unsuitable place possible. It is very cramped, commanded on all sides by heights within easy rifle-range, and the only path down to the sole water-supply—a small stream—leads along the face of a slope, opposite which is an unoccupied hill, barely four hundred yards distant. This camp is five thousand six hundred feet above the sea, or one hundred and sixty-three feet below the City of Caubul.

The following day we marched to Sêh Bâbâ, eleven miles. The road was very bad, and we had great trouble with the dooly-bearers and baggage-animals, not lessened by meeting a drove of mules laden with telegraph-poles at the most difficult

part of our route. As these poles are merely lashed loosely together at the thick ends, and placed on the mules' backs with twelve or fourteen feet of pine-spar trailing along behind—and one man has usually to drive six or eight of these naturally perverse and obstinate beasts, which are not even tied together—the effect of meeting a few dozen of them on a narrow, unfenced mountain path may be easily imagined. Directly on leaving the encamping ground the road goes up a very steep ascent till it crosses the Luttabund Kotul, seven thousand six hundred and fifty feet above sea-level, and then drops again as steeply into the narrow, rocky bed of a small stream, which it follows for some distance, continuing its course over low, barren hills, till, passing along a narrow and dangerous path worn in the face of a red and yellow sandstone cliff, it descends rapidly to the bed of a stream, on the opposite bank of which lies Sêh.Bâbâ, where we found some of the 45th Sikhs encamped.

On the 8th, we reached Jugdulluck, twelve miles from our last camp. The road was much as usual,

and the wretched dooly-bearers were getting foot-sore, so our convoy was longer than usual on the road. Half-way we passed "Tukht-i-Pool," where a large masonry bridge spans a stream, now shallow and easily forded. I rode over the bridge, and found that a good deal of the parapet and about half the roadway on the right (south) side had been carried away by floods, but the remainder is quite strong and wide enough for field-guns to cross.

Leaving the Jugdulluck Pass on our left (north), we took the newly made road to camp leading round the base of the hills, and on our arrival found a small force of all arms under Colonel Ball-Acton of the 51st K.O.L.I. A picnic party was just starting for the "Purri Durrah," or "Fairy's Glen," but I was too busy to accept an invitation to join.

The next day's march was a repetition of the former ones, but on the 10th of January we passed the "Lâl Teebah," or "Red Hill," where the remnants of our unfortunate army were destroyed in January 1842, and the 44th Foot was all but annihilated. I rode up the low hill, which is said to

have gained its name from the torrents of blood poured out on its rocky sides on that disastrous day, when thousands of armed fanatics surrounded the gallant little band, but dared not close till our men—worn out with marching, thirst, and fierce excitement, their ammunition expended, and strength so failing that they could hardly keep their feet or hold their muskets—fell at length an easy prey to their merciless enemies, only one poor weary survivor riding alone, half broken-hearted, to carry the terrible tidings to Jĕllâlabad.

The hill is crowned by a small masonry obelisk, which has been broken open on the western side.

On the 12th of January we reached Rozâbâd, a pretty little fort occupied by some Cavalry, Infantry, and Madras Sappers. On our way we passed through the village of Futtiabâd, where Brydon and Bellew were attacked, and the latter killed, during their flight from the Red Hill. Some other fugitives also reached this village, and were slain by order of a neighbouring chief named Abdool Guffoor. Dr. Brydon was hidden by a fukeer in a water-mill for three days. On the third

night he was able to make his escape, and reached Jellâlabad on the 13th of January, exactly thirty-eight years from the day on which we heard the story, standing by the mill, on the very spot where the event had occurred.

Dr. Bellew, C.S.I., who was one of our fellow-travellers, questioned the inhabitants as to this, and they gave him the following account:—

"Just after the great fight at the Red Hill, in the evening, two sahibs rode up here, where you are standing. Their horses were thirsty, and they themselves were half dead with fatigue. A fukeer (hermit), who then had the little watermill close by, came out, and one of the sahibs spoke to him in Hindustâni, which he understood. This sahib dismounted, and went aside with the fukeer. Immediately afterwards some of Abdool Guffoor's men came up, and cut the other sahib to pieces. He was too fatigued to resist. Afterwards some other sahibs came up; they were all tired, and covered with blood and perspiration. They also were killed by Abdool Guffoor's men.

"The first sahib was hidden by the fukeer for

three days, but on the third night, it having been remarked that the fukeer begged for much more food than usual, Abdool Guffoor's men determined to institute a strict search through all his usual dwelling-places.* A friend of the fukeer's warned him of this, so he, on the third night, sent the sahib on a *yâboo* (pony) to the English army, which was in the city of Jellâlabad."

We had been told that Rozâbâd was to be our home for the rest of the winter, as there was plenty of forage in the neighbourhood, and we could obtain stores from Jellâlabad, which was nine miles off, so we handed over our convoy to another escort, and set to work busily to make ourselves comfortable, in which we received every assistance from Major Ross Thompson and his men.

On January the 14th we had a downpour of rain — the first which had fallen since leaving Koorum in September.

* A Mussulman fukeer often has several resting-places, sometimes miles apart.

CHAPTER XIX.

ORDERED BACK TO INDIA.—JELLALABAD.—ALI MUSJID.—JUMROOD.—CONTRAST BETWEEN KHYBER AND KOORUM ROUTES.—STERN MEASURES REQUIRED.—SOMETHING LIKE A COMPLIMENT!—PESHAWUR.

WE had not been long in fancied peace before we were again disturbed by an order to return to India, so Tuesday, the 20th of January, saw us again in the saddle, and we marched to Jellâlabad, much relieved at having no convoy to look after and drive along.

The headquarters of the Kyber Column under General Bright were at Jellâlabad, and we here saw a company of Madras Sappers and Miners of whom we had read most flourishing accounts. They were small, weakly-looking men, who ap-

peared to us quite unfit for work. Apparently they passed most of their time in practising original bugle-calls.

The town of Jellâlabad, celebrated for its gallant defence in the winter of 1841 by General Sale, is surrounded by a bastioned wall of moderate height, and supplied with water from the Caubul River, on the right (or southern) bank of which it is built. The surrounding plain is, like almost all the ground in this part of Affghânistan, arid and stony, intersected by nullahs and rocky ridges; but a branch of the valley running up into the hills on the north-west is fertile and well cultivated.

Next morning we reached Busâwul, so long our advanced post on this line after the signature of the treaty of Gundamuck on the 26th of the previous May.

Here we found a small force comfortably located in a fort not far from the bank of the Caubul River, which here appeared in far more majestic proportions than it had presented when we crossed it on our march to Bhootkâk. It now rolled along

in considerable volume, swollen by the contributions of many a mountain stream, but still it was difficult to imagine that close to this very spot so many of the gallant 10th Hussars had been silently and mysteriously swept into eternity through missing a ford at night.*

Next morning (the 22nd) we marched to Dhâkâ, and thence, *viâ* Lundi Kotul and Ali Musjid, through the Khyber to Jumrood, where we found the old fort looking quite clean and in good repair.

The whole of our march down from Caubul had lain through barren, rocky, and uncultivated country, forming a marked contrast to that which we had traversed between the Peiwâr Kotul and the capital. The road also was much worse, and the only counterbalancing benefit derived from the Khyber route lay in its being considerably shorter than that by the Koorum Valley, the distances from the two bases of operations, Peshawur and

* I rode across this ford myself, and its breadth, and the shallowness of the water, which was only knee-deep, increases the difficulty.

Kohât, to Caubul being respectively twelve and twenty-one marches.

At Ali Musjid a new stone fort had been erected by us since the commencement of the war, which had apparently already produced the good effect of over-awing or tranquillising the neighbouring robber tribes, whose principal inducement to seek their living by plundering passing caravans had been the perfect immunity from punishment which they had hitherto enjoyed. This really has also led to the petty, but most troublesome and costly, border wars in which we have been so frequently and fruitlessly engaged from our first occupation of Peshawur to the Jowâki skirmishes in 1877–78. Now that we have troops located not only in their front and rear, but even in the very heart of their hill fastnesses, our predatory neighbours may possibly be brought to see the error of their ways, especially if "Exeter Hall tactics" are abandoned till a more suitable time, and we treat these murdering freebooters as the savages they really are, instead of dealing with them as civilised people, which they are certainly *very* far from being.

We left Jumrood early on Tuesday, the 27th of January, and before we had proceeded far we met the 2nd Battalion of the 14th Foot, commanded by Colonel Dawson Warren, an old friend, and well known throughout the Service for his soldierly abilities and social qualities. Of course we drew up by the roadside to pay the usual compliments to the senior regiment, (in India, all Native regiments, of whatever branch, salute all British troops,) but our comrades of the same number, though of different race, insisted on reversing the usual order of proceeding, and paid us the very high honour of forming up and saluting while their band played us, the junior regiment, past their front. This was as gratifying to us as it was well meant, and the compliment was most fully appreciated by all in our ranks, both British and Native.

At noon we marched into the station of Peshawur, and the officers breakfasted with those of the 8th Hussars, amongst whom I had the unexpected pleasure of meeting a kinsman.

In the afternoon we enjoyed the unaccustomed

luxury of a drive; and the sight of church and gardens, barracks and bungalows, carriages and shops, and—last, but most welcome of all—*ladies*, assured us that we were once more in a British cantonment.

L'ENVOI.

SINCE these notes were penned Sir Frederick Roberts and his gallant force have won fresh laurels, in which I regret to say the writer and his regiment had no share. However, it is not for soldiers to *choose* their duty, but to *do* it, and however much we may envy our more fortunate brothers in arms, we most certainly do not grudge them their additional honours. Long may they live to wear them, and may we again serve together with the same good fellowship and cordiality as in the Caubul Campaign!

"Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to herself do rest but true."

King John, Act v. Sc. 7.

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